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ABSTRACT

In June 1993, the European Commission adopted a recommendation on access to continuing vocational training (CVT) in the European Union (EU). EU member states' progress was assessed by reviewing national reports drafted in accordance with an agreed-upon structure. The national reports demonstrated a wide range of new approaches and initiatives for promoting access to CVT, in terms of both member states' public policies and the social partners' or corporate policies. According to a 1993 survey, national rates of access to CVT ranged from 13% (in Portugal and Greece) to 43% (in Ireland). Important disparities between sectors were also found. After assessing progress toward improving access to CVT within the context of the various economic, demographic, and social developments that have occurred in Europe since 1993, the commission council issued nine action proposals, including the following: establish common conditions for facilitating access to CVT at the EC level and at the sectoral level; make CVT access reports a regular feature and simultaneously refine them to ensure that national reports and social partners' reports are uniformly drawn on common criteria; and present a plan for action on CVT training in an information society. (The text of the 1993 recommendation is appended.) (MN)

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ED 418 271

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 30.04.1997
COM(97) 180 final

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

on access to continuing training in the Union

(Council Recommendation of 30 June 1993)

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Introduction

The vital nature of continuing training and the promotion of access thereto were highlighted by the European Commission at the beginning of the 1990s. Its *Memorandum on vocational training in the EC in the 1990s*[1] stressed that the combined effects of accelerating technological and organisational change and of demographic developments would confer a central role on continuing training policies. There was broad support for this proposal during the discussion this memorandum prompted with the Member States. The Commission also advocated an approach whereby continuing training, underpinned by a solid corpus of basic training, would be pursued throughout life.

The Community advanced further in this direction when on 30 June 1993 the Council adopted a Recommendation on access to vocational training,[2] thus allowing the Community's collaborative endeavour over the years to promote access to continuing training to be pursued around a common reference framework.

In parallel with this, the discussions on employment, triggered by the economic situation and globalisation, have pushed to the top of the agenda the issue of the skili. employees and their enhancement. And in the wake of the Commission's White Paper *Growth, competitiveness and employment*, the Essen European Council of December 1994 put forward investment in training as one of five priorities to be pursued.

The reforms of the structural funds, the European Social Fund in particular, which took place for the 1994-99 period, place skills enhancement at the forefront. The new Objective 4 in particular, concerned to "facilitate workers' adaptation to industrial changes and to changes in production systems", underlined the importance of maintaining skill levels and placed the Social Fund for the first time at the service of workers in employment (as compared with the unemployed).

Other Community programmes like FORCE[3] (1991-1994) and more recently the Leonardo da Vinci (1995-1999)[4] are also community instruments aimed at providing access: they expect to stimulate innovation in vocational training while contributing particularly to development of new approaches and methods of training which facilitate access to training and competencies.

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[1] COM(91) 397 final of 12 December 1991.

[2] OJ No L 181/37 of 23 July 1993 (see Annex).

[3] OJ No. L 156/1 of 21° June 1990

[4] OJ No. L340/1 of 29° December 1994

The proclamation of 1996 as "*the European Year of Lifelong Learning*", made it possible to make European citizens profoundly aware of the need to enhance their skills throughout life.

This discussion has shown that there is a very high level of aspiration to get into training, but that there was seen to be a gap between this aspiration to lifelong training and the actual opportunities afforded Europe's workers and citizens.

The Commission accordingly opened up a new perspective in which an even more vital role is given to the development of access to training: that of the learning society. In its White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*[5] the Commission proposes that "*access to training should be developed throughout life. While this is a need stressed all round by public authorities and the business sector alike, progress in this direction is slow and all the more inadequate as the changes in work organisation stemming inter alia from information technology are making training in these new tools very urgent*".

Available skills can no longer be renewed through the succession of generations of workers, but has to be done within a cycle which is constantly accelerating under the combined pressure of two factors:

- the shortening of the horizon of technological change and changes in work organisation,
- the inversion of the age pyramid of the active population, the growing participation of women in the labour market, which is bringing about a shift in training requirements notably towards women and older workers .

Vocational training policy, particularly that which the Community is responsible for implementing under Article 127 of the Treaty EC, must be pursued within these structural trends and must place greater emphasis on the continuing training of workers.

Under the various actions which are part of the confidence pact for employment launched by the Commission in April 1996, the European Council of Florence in its conclusions (June 1996) confirmed at the Dublin Council (December 1996):

• ———————————

[5] COM(95) 590 of 25 November 1995.

"The European Council underlines that the educational and training systems in the European Union will need to adapt profoundly. It takes note of the Commission intention to present a proposal on the access to, and the recognition of, skills acquired from lifelong learning".

In their joint declaration on employment preparatory to the European Council of Dublin, the social partners gave pride of place to lifelong training along the priority themes. They pointed out that:

"Economic change, the employment situation and the emergence of new technologies, particularly information technologies mean deep-seated changes on the employment market and in society in general. These trends bring out the ***need to expand individual skills****, and this means a change of attitude to lifelong training.* ***Moreover, access to vocational training throughout working life should be improved****. Lifelong training will become increasingly important to the competitiveness of companies, as it will for employees when it comes to geographical and professional mobility."*

In the same way the Council decision on a third multi-annual programme for small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in the Union (1997-2000)[6] gives an impetus to the importance of training to improve the management capacity of managers and reinforce the competitiveness of SMEs.

Within this Community process, this *Report on Access to Continuing Training* has as to principle objective the evaluation of the progress made globally in the application of the Council Recommendation and the presentation of proposals of new avenues for reinforcing community action on access training regard to the real challenges which have to be faced to achieve it. .

The Commission has opted not to limit itself to a descriptive report based on a simple stock-taking exercise. The Commission is keen to make this report an instrument for framing the debate on access to continuing training in the EU seeking to enquire : what the exact situation is, where are the major disparities like, how progress can be made?

• ———————————

[6] O.J. L6/25 of 10 January 1997

The Commission thus also hopes that this report will provide the basis for a genuine in-depth debate on the policies to be pursued in this area with a view to lifelong training. The Commission's hope is that this report should also open on to new avenues for more ambitious action on widening and raising competencies . It sees these as a step towards an open debate on the learning society.

The Commission attaches great importance to this report and the contributions made to its evaluation by the Community authorities. It underscores the points that:

- a Community report in the area of vocational training is being submitted for the first time,

- training is playing an increasingly important role in all discussions to do with employment, competitiveness, our model of society and in the construction of a learning society.

Chapter 1

Progress on access to continuing vocational training

1.1 The Community process based on the Council's Recommendation

The starting point: the Social Charter

The question of access to vocational training often came up in Community texts. Then in 1989 when the European Council of Strasbourg and 11 Member States adopted of the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers the debate on this issue really got under way. Article 15 of the Charter states that *"every worker of the EC must be able to have access to vocational training and to benefit therefrom throughout his working life. The competent public authorities, undertakings or the two sides of industry, each within their own sphere of competence, should set up continuing and permanent training systems enabling every person to undergo retraining, more especially through leave for training purposes, to improve his skills or to acquire new skills, particularly in the light of technical developments"*.

Subsequently, the action programme for the implementation of the Social Charter, confirmed the increasing importance of new ways of access to training and called upon the Member States, the business sector and the social partners to take action so that each worker could pursue his training throughout his working life.

This programme also foresaw the submission by, the Commission to the Council of a proposal for a Community instrument on access to vocational training. The Community institutional debate on The Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers was, in effect, the catalyst which led to the adoption of the Recommendation on access to continuing training.

The Social Dialogue

In recognising the growing importance of better access to vocational training for the competitiveness of the business sector and for social cohesion, the partners involved in the European social dialogue (UNICE, CEEP and ETUC[7]) placed this issue within the body of

[7] UNICE - Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
CEEP - European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation
ETUC - European Trade Union Confederation

work of the social dialogue on education and training and in December 1991 adopted a *"Joint opinion on ways of facilitating the broadest possible effective access to training opportunities"*, in the preamble to which, they state that:

"a large proportion of the adult population left school without adequate qualifications for today's demands or has never attended any systematic, continuing training; their level of qualification results in a paradoxical situation where many of the training courses on offer are not open to them owing to a lack of basic skills and knowledge", and, furthermore, that: *"competitive and success enterprises are those which implement, with proper consultation of employees and/or their representatives, vocational training programmes that are the most relevant and of the best quality standards"*.

They also stress that: *"the social partners have an important role to play in setting up partnerships at regional level to promote greater synergy between company training programmes and forecasts of future demand for certain occupations and skills at regional level"*.

Significantly, the guidelines of this joint opinion have by and large been incorporated into the text of the Council Recommendation.

At sectoral level, in joint committees or informal working groups, the social partners have adopted a certain number of common opinions concerning access to vocational training and lifelong learning. In particular:

- the Joint Opinion on improved access to vocational training for women in the textile and clothing sector (16 June 1994);
- The Opinion on the VT of ground engineers and maintenance staff (15 September 1993);
- The negotiation of the framework agreement for employment in agriculture, which is to be signed in June 1997, where continuing vocational training plays a central role and where the social partners seek further agreement especially on this subject

The adoption of the Recommendation by the Council in June 1993 after and in-depth debate on the content by the Community authorities (EP, ECOSOC) and the social partners (particularly within the ACVT) marked the launching of a Community process on three complementary levels:

a) The definition of a general objective stemming from the Social Charter according to which: *"every worker of the EC must be able to have access to vocational training and to benefit therefrom throughout his working life"*.(Art. I).

b) The definition of 15 specific objectives which would make it possible to attain this overarching objective while leaving the decision on the ways and means for doing so up to the Member States and the social partners (Art. II).

c) The establishment at the Community level of a system to monitor developments on access, in the Member States and at the Community level (Art. III & IV).

This system is based on a triple process:

1. the drawing up of national reports by the Member States on the implementation of the recommendation and its objectives (Article IV.1)

The Member States were asked to agree on a common structure for drafting their national reports in particular on measures taken since 1993 to promote access to continuing training. They were also asked to prepare these reports in conjunction with the social partners, - a procedure which was followed by many Member States.

2. Setting up a social dialogue support system on continuing training (Article III.3)

The Recommendation called upon the Commission to support the dialogue between the social partners on this theme. It accordingly set up a "support system for the social dialogue on continuing training" in close conjunction with the European organisations involved in the European social dialogue, the UNICE, the CEEP and the ETUC.

This made it possible to take stock in the EU Member States of steps taken by the social partners to develop continuing training. Often this in itself, had a direct impact on access to such training.

Two "Compendia" were published on this in 1994 and 1996, in order to illustrate ten themes of

common interest to the social partners, noting tangible initiatives taken at company, branch, sector, regional or national levels.

The two seminars organised by the social partners (October 1994 and May 1996) to examine the results illustrated the worthwhile nature and added value of this instrument as an instrument of collection, observation, analysis and dissemination of innovatory and wide-ranging initiatives for a better understanding of what was happening in the field in the Member States.

The ten themes identified by the social partners broadly follow the key aspects set out in the objectives of Part II of the Council Recommendation.

THE THEMES OF THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE SUPPORT SYSTEM

Theme 1:	Planning of training within the company
Theme 2:	SMEs
Theme 3:	Organisational development
Theme 4:	Specific types of employment
Theme 5:	Occupational integration of young people
Theme 6:	New forms of co-operation at regional level
Theme 7:	Certification/recognition
Theme 8:	Means and methods
Theme 9:	Allocation of resources
Theme 10:	New responses to individual requirements

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3. Preparing a Community report on 'Access to continuing training in the EU' in order to take stock of progress and put forward proposals to strengthen Community- action (Article IV.2).

The main point of this report is to assess overall progress made and to illustrate the trends under way, taking due account of the diversity of the national systems. It should also illustrate the value of efforts made by the Member States and the steps taken by the social players in general and the social partners in particular.

The report is based on:

a) the national reports drawn up by each of the Member States pursuant to Article IV.1 of the Recommendation;[8]

b) the reports drawn up by the Community organisations of social partners, i.e. the ETUC and the UNICE/CEEP, pursuant to Article IV.2.

The Commission has also drawn substantially on:

1) The first comparable figures from the Community CVTS[9] and the LFS.[10]
2) The results of the support structure for the social dialogue and vocational training set up in conjunction with the social partners (UNICE, CEEP and ETUC) published in the two compendia in 1994 and 1996.

1.2 National reports show a wide range of national initiatives

1.2.1 Introduction

The reports prepared by the Member States form an interesting basis of information and analysis on trends and progress with regard to access to continuing training, and on the way in which access is organised in the different Member States.

Many reports provide comprehensive descriptions of the support systems for continuing training.

The following points arise from an overall examination of the national reports:

1. The EU countries are all determined to find new solutions to the challenges posed by the need for continuing training and the direct or indirect promotion of access to training., Nearly all of them provided examples of new

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[8] The information contained in these reports have also been supplemented by elements from the multiannual programmes established under the follow-up process to the conclusions of the Essen European Summit on employment.

[9] Continuing Vocational Training Survey

[10] Labour Force Survey

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measures,- introduced in the 1990s,- which have a bearing on access to continuing training.

2. Most of these measures are however, part of action for general 'reform' of training systems in the Member States, thus limiting the scope for more detailed analyses of the impact of the measures.

3. On the other hand, many promising initiatives escape the attention of a purely systemic administrative scrutiny, because they were undertaken at company or branch level.(a certain number of very promising initiatives were spotted in the reports of the social partners in the course of doing the Compendia of support systems in the Social Dialogue.)

Implementing the objectives

As noted earlier, the national reports very often describe the developments in systems and measures to promote access, but without providing any great detail in relation to each single objective of the Council Recommendation of 30 June 1993

It was therefore considered more worthwhile to analyse national trends for certain themes.

- A first theme relates to access and company policy. This covers mainly Objectives 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 of the Recommendation.

- The second relates more specifically to access requirements of individuals (Objectives 3 and 7), i.e. examining initiatives for individuals access to training.

- The third theme relates to the retraining of workers (Objective 4).

- The fourth deals with access to training for specific target groups such as the less-qualified workers (Objective 11), women (Objective 12), young people (Objective 13) and the long-term unemployed (Objective 14).

- A fifth theme will consider access and new partnerships (Objectives 5 and 15).

- A sixth theme will deal with new technologies and access (Objective 10). Major developments and pointers for action and initiatives need noting for each theme.

- A final theme will deal with the use of Community funds in support of local initiatives.

Following analysis major themes are illustrated by actions and initiatives.

1.2.2 Access and company policy

This is a vast theme which groups together initiatives on measures to make provision for non-active status for workers, promote information and consultation at company level and anticipation of training requirements and the development of plans notably the development of training plans for workers, information and consultation in enterprises or the forward planning of training needs.

The national reports confirm that it is enterprises which take responsibility for policy on continuing vocational training of their employees. They are the main and frequent initiators of action and it is they who mainly fund such training.

The exercise of this responsibility by companies is supported in certain Member States by binding systems, e.g. **France** is distinctive by its system of a generalised obligation to contribute financially to training under the terms of the law of 16 July 1971. But France is not alone in having a potentially binding arrangement on companies. These obligations may come from the compulsory payment into a solidarity fund, such as a recent measure to establish funds for high-risk groups in **Belgium**, or the system of taxes/subsidies in certain sectors in **Ireland**, or legislation on training leave as adopted by **Finland, Sweden, certain Länder in Germany**, etc. In **Spain**, on the other hand, there is an indirect system of contributions to finance vocational training. The money is collected through Social Security payments and is calculated at 0,7% of the rate of contributions for occupational accidents and illnesses.

Certain Member States make the valid point that access to continuing vocational training is unevenly distributed among companies (size, area of activity, etc.), but also among workers (socio-professional status) in companies, irrespective of the binding nature of the arrangements.

The right to information

Certain Member States have practices designed to encourage information and consultation on company training policy by worker representatives.

A definitive model of an obligation to provide information was not provided by any Member State. Information policy clearly builds up on an ad hoc basis and varies according to the providers and recipients. **Germany** feels that employees and workers often receive information on training opportunities during recruitment interviews. Information may also be given in contracts of employment or collective agreements, or be published by the Chamber of Trades or the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The social partners in particular seek to improve channels of information. In December 1996 key players agreed to develop an information system within the Federal Vocational Training Institute, to which training committees could refer.

Member States have also stepped up their efforts to raise awareness through general and targeted campaigns. For instance, a note entitled "*Kennis in beweging*" was published in the **Netherlands** in June 1995. In **France**, major organisations such as the FONGECIF publicise their arrangements on individual training leave by mail and in the press as well as by audio-visual means. **Finland** successfully launched a vast campaign in 1994 to inform companies of the opportunities available on apprenticeship based training contracts.

The information campaigns in the **UK** are targeted at companies through programmes such as *Investors in People* and *Small firms initiatives*. The same is true in **Ireland** where the new project called *Excellence in People* was set up in 1995. These are projects aimed at achieving high quality standards by investing in human resources. The objective is to create a link between the company's strategic objectives and the vocational training policy objectives.

Similarly, **Denmark** organises public information campaigns, notably targeted at SMEs. It is noteworthy that the information drive is pursued not only by the public authorities and the business sector, but also by the trade unions. In this regard, the **Danish** report makes a note of the activities on information which has to be put at the service of the social partners particularly at the regional and local levels.

Efforts to channel information and raise awareness of opportunities on the vocational training market are also supported by vocational counselling sectors, sometimes combined with activities such as skills assessment exercises. In **Norway**, for instance, a system of contact points has been set up in order to ensure that training providers are put into direct contact with the consumers, companies and individuals. Many Member States mention the setting up of databanks or guides, and/or *Points of Information*. The **United Kingdom, Ireland and Luxembourg**, as well as others, see this as a way of securing better information flow and thus better access to vocational training.

Portugal recently set up a programme entitled *Training for micro enterprises and small enterprises* in an attempt to promote information and raise awareness among entrepreneurs and employees as to the need to develop their human resources through vocational training.

Consultation at company level

There is a growing trend towards more involvement in and responsibility being taken for training by the social partners in general. In the **Netherlands**, for instance, the social partners are being given more say in the context of the revision of the law on vocational teaching and training (WEB) which came into force in January 1996. National bodies, comprising representatives of employers' organisations and trade unions co-operate with the educational establishments in drawing up exit qualifications for each sector of industry, group of sectors, or occupational category, applicable to all types of senior secondary vocational education. The social partners are also given a role as providers of resource centres for the distribution of information, for motivating companies to identify their own skills requirements, and for organising the necessary measures. In **Finland**, the role and development of employee training are currently being examined during tripartite negotiations as part of the Council of Ministers employment programme for 1996-99. **Italy** and **Portugal** also stress the growing importance in this context of the social partners. The latter, through their sectoral organisations, co-operate with the public authorities in defining, shaping and implementing training policies. In an increasing number of cases, collective agreements set out the general

principles applicable to the sound management of vocational training at sector and company level.

In **Spain**, the role of the social partners is written into the national and tripartite agreements on vocational training and is reflected by their involvement in the FORCEM continuing training foundation, -a tripartite body established for the organisation, management and implementation of action decided under these agreements with support from the ESF.

In **France**, the law requires workers' representatives to be informed and consulted on the drafting and implementation of training plans and programmes. It is compulsory for the works council to be consulted at least once yearly on the guidelines and the vocational training plan. In **Germany** works councils also have the right of information .

Collective agreements which become the forum for consultation on vocational training are a further strong development. Tripartite consultation and co-operation are part of the **Danish** model and collective agreements are the main regulatory instrument (covering over 90% of the Danish labour market). **Germany** opts for a similar solution and feels that it is neither necessary or wise to legislate on the matter, if the continuing training market is to remain very flexible. For both initial VT and continuing training, German companies, namely the employers and trade unions, have traditionally been committed to the qualifications of their workforce. But the individual and the State also have a share in this responsibility. The State fulfils its role through various laws, e.g. the, *Berufsbildungsgeset* - the 1969 legislation on vocational training, *Berufsbildungsförderungsgesetz* - the 1994 legislation on the promotion of vocational training, *Arbeitsförderungsgesetz* - the 1969 legislation on the promotion of employment, *Aufstiegsbildungsförderungsgesetz* - legislation on the promotion of continuing vocational training, and in the Länder through the *Bildungsurlaubsgesetze* - legislation on the training leave (various dates), *Weiterbildungs- und Erwachsenenbildungsgesetze* - legislations on the continuing training for adults (various dates).

The increased importance of collective agreements is noted by the **Netherlands**, **Sweden** and **Norway**. In **Sweden** matters relating to continuing training are often settled by the sector. Central collective agreements propose recommendations, but it is increasingly common for the examination of the subject to take place at the regional level.

Finland states clearly that the general trend is for training-related matters to be negotiated within the company.

However, training remains a matter for dialogue-based negotiation on which there is not always unanimity, particularly on matters like the objectives of training and who pays. This point is made by **Denmark**. Talks on these matters are in progress in several Member States. They are a central preoccupation for the **Luxembourg** government in its preparation of a framework law on continuing training.

Germany raises *inter alia* the question of responsibility for funding and considers that the trend is towards making individuals more responsible.

This trend is also apparent in the **UK** where increasing numbers of employees and other individuals are taking more responsibility for their own learning. Encouraging individuals to become more pro-active in meeting their learning needs is a major component in the UK Government's strategy for skills.

Belgium notes that consultation on training takes place only for high-risk groups, and is low on the agenda during negotiations at company level.

The strategic importance of training plans

One of the main operational instruments of training at company level is the implementation of training plans.

In **France**, the training plan is the principle way in which the employer is accountable in terms of actual expenditure and in relation to employees affected. Training plans are also an integral part of the **Finnish** strategy. Under the law on consultation in companies, those having over 30 employees are obliged to establish a personnel and training plan every year on the basis of negotiations with the employee representatives.

In **Portugal**, the granting of financial and technical aid under the second Community Support Framework (CSF), which has legal validity, obliges companies to prepare and make known the human resource development plans

they intend to pursue. Under the national tripartite agreement of 1992 in **Spain**, funding of VT essentially concerns company training plans, individual training leave and the theory- based training which apprenticeship contracts cover.

Denmark notes that the "size of company" factor often determines whether or not there is a training plan as such. The Ministry of Labour accordingly set up two funds, both of which can pay subsidies for programming activities. The major elements in the Danish approach are "funding measures", "proximity" (by delegation of responsibility to the regions) and "awareness raising campaigns".

The **Netherlands** recently launched the IMPULS programme in a number of sectors. This consists of an integrated approach in each sector, which must open on, through a strategic plan, to activities for achieving a structural improvement in matching vocational training to the employment market.

With regard to training plans, **France** is innovating by increasingly gearing these plans to the changing technologies and changing markets. This is encouraged by contractual policy which is based in part on a planning instrument, the CEP (*Contrat d'études prospectives*) which seeks to define developments in trades. The CEP is becoming increasingly frequently a basis for the conclusion of training development commitments.

France:
The Contrats d'etudes prospectives

Although it dates back to the 1980s, the CEP is still an effective system for analysing training requirements and assisting action which is steered through co-operation with the social partners.

The CEP is based on two principles:

- It is a contract which binds the social partners, the state and one or more operators, private consultants or public establishments, in carrying out prospective studies. The state provides half the budget.

- The operators are chosen jointly by the social partners and the state within the framework of a public tendering procedure based on specifications. A tripartite steering committee sees that the specifications and deadlines are respected, monitors the work and validates the results.

In the **UK** a company training plan linked to business objectives is a key feature of "*Investors in People*". Companies are increasingly adopting the "*Investors in People Standard*" as a framework for effective investment in training and the development of a learning culture.

To raise awareness in enterprises of the link between workers' current skills and their competencies

Some Member States are promoting awareness of the business sector of a link between workers' skills and company competitiveness. **Germany** has a specific programme entitled 'Consolidating the industrial fabric by building up occupational skills'. ESF Objective 4 funds are used for measures to raise awareness in enterprises of the link between competencies and current skills.

The **UK** and **Ireland** likewise have specific programmes, and **Belgium** has set up one on the quest for quality.

The distinguishing feature of the **UK's** system is the presence and implementation of numerous initiatives and programmes designed in general to improve individual access to training. Mention must be made here of programmes like *Investors in People* whose purpose is to improve the economic performance of companies by

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establishing the relationship between training and the development of employees and the company's strategic objectives. The delivery is via the Training Enterprises Councils (TECs) and, in the case of **Scotland**, Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), providing a framework which makes it possible to develop human resources in companies and to structure training activities as economic investments. More flexible arrangements will be introduced in 1997 as part of *Local Competitiveness Budget* to improve co-operation between local partners supporting training and firms and thus attain the objectives set out in the *Investors in People* programme and enhance the economic performance of the business sector. A second initiative which will continue to obtain this objective is *National Training Awards*. This is a prize awarded to employers, training providers or individuals in respect of measures which have proved particularly effective by having an immediate effect on the company's economic performance or the fulfilment of the individual.

The Walloon region in **Belgium** has focused its support on tangible action to make employers and workers aware of quality by labelling products and certifying companies. **Germany** also notes that there is a trend towards an increasing number of certified training establishments. It is becoming increasingly important for several CVT players to co-operate in mastering more complex tasks/subjects. Another major trend sees some big companies starting to shift VT outside - partly for financial reasons - and leaving it up to those involved in training to improve provision on the training market (outsourcing).

The crucial importance of qualifications

One trend which is emerging strongly is that of access and recognition of qualifications. The awareness of workers and companies as to the importance of continuing vocational training opening on to qualifications which are relevant on the employment market has become a prime objective in the fight to remain competitive.

Germany observes that today's jobs increasingly call for key skills, language and communications skills, a capacity for creativeness and innovation, and multi skilling, in other words, a far broader spectrum of occupational ability. This is reflected by developments in CVT, e.g. decentralisation, client-oriented approaches, involvement of staff and workers, incorporation as part of the employee's career progression, closer links between work and education/training. New methods and new forums of training are therefore needed if better quality is to be achieved.

It is symptomatic that most Member States acknowledge the importance of discussions on qualifications. The **Netherlands** in 1993 set up the Commission for the recognition of qualifications acquired (EVK). The system of diplomas for professional studies for the adults came into force in 1994. The vocational studies diploma system in **Finland** makes it possible to obtain paper qualification based on acquiring occupational know-how irrespective of its method of acquisition.. Since 1995 this has been carried forward by the ALVAR project on the control of the quality of documents used for vocational examinations.

Finland:
The national language diploma

The national language diploma (set up by the legislation of 1994) splits up language proficiency into nine levels. Any person who so wishes can take a test to verify his/her knowledge, irrespective of how it was acquired. This is an official diploma and is checked by the authorities. Nine languages are currently involved: Finnish, Lapp, English, Swedish, French, German, Russian, Italian, Spanish.

French legislation has always stressed the need for continuing vocational training leading to qualifications which are relevant to the employment market. The CEP reflects the same concern. In **Denmark**, also aims to make training pathways open on to qualifications.

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United Kingdom:
National vocational qualifications (NVQs)

The UK in 1986 introduced major changes to rationalise its very diverse system in the area of vocational qualifications, by establishing an overall framework of NVQs. A parallel system of Scottish vocational qualifications (SVQ) was introduced for Scotland.

The NVQ and SVQ provide a yardstick of the skills and aptitudes which employers have defined as necessary for today's jobs. They are based on national performance standards at work established by the employers for the employers. They reflect real employment requirements by ensuring a multi-skilled and flexible workforce with broad-based knowledge as required by today's highly competitive global market.

Member States are seeking operational instruments in their efforts to improve the current level of recognition of qualifications. The **Netherlands**, for instance, have set up a fund for innovation in technology and vocational training. **Belgium** is planning to set up an observatory for the labour market and qualifications.

Efforts targeting the SMEs

It is well known that there are problems of access to continuing training for the SMEs and their employees. The Member States have logically enough stepped up aid programmes targeted at SMEs. Assistance is aimed at training counselling, the analysis of training requirements, etc.

The **Finnish** project entitled "a skilled Finland" clearly illustrates the ambitions and the challenges.

Finland:
The "skilled Finland" project

Recently launched (1996), the "skilled Finland" project is a co-operation project between the social partners, certain ministries and the Directorate-General for Education. The objective is to develop the know how for staff and subcontractors of SMEs by understanding how diplomas arising from the 1994 legislation could better serve the specific requirements of those enterprises seeking to improve the competence of their employees. The specialists recruited for the project assist companies in evaluating the present level of know-how of employees and their future requirements in this area, and in finding the right establishments to organise training. In co-operation with all those in the world of work the Finns wish to make a concrete reality of the principle of the lifelong apprenticeship

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The general trend is towards the preparation and testing of specific programmes, the mobilisation of awareness-raising and empowerment campaigns, and the creation of specific institutions. There is also a trend towards a more flexible, more adaptable and more customised training provision.

The **UK** has introduced a number of initiatives like *"Skills for Small Businesses"*, and *"Skills Challenge"*, to help small firms to overcome barriers to training. The *"Small Firms Training Loans"* scheme is designed to provide funding for these companies with a view to training. The **Netherlands** launched a specific programme - VRIJMARKT - in 1994, targeting the SMEs.. Several types of sandwich training are also being tried out, such as the SME-based training targeted at pupils in higher vocational education. Actions targeting the SMEs are also a priority in **Spain**.

Germany underlines the need for regional co-operation to ensure qualitative and quantitative provision for meeting demands, especially from the SMEs, and boost interaction between economic development and the labour market. To meet the needs of the SMEs training methods are designed to be integrated into work, i.e. the business sector, and continuing vocational training dovetail.

France has also intensified action, although it acknowledges that success of some of these

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measures have been modest, e.g. the system of government aid for the replacement of certain employees undergoing training. Other measures are strictly financial in nature such as tax credit for training to act as a tax incentive to companies to increasing their training expenditure annually.. **Austria** also notes the importance of fiscal measures.

Luxembourg
Preparation of a new framework law on CVT

The Luxembourg government is setting up new structures to address continuing vocational training. The government's view is that general provisions are needed and that care must be taken not to stifle the emerging momentum of this market by excessively centralised and excessively binding measures. The government has therefore opted to play a role to co-ordinate and help define a framework within which the market can develop.

On the basis of an opinion drafted by the Economic and Social Council, an interministerial group is in the process of preparing a bill of law which will lead to overall provisions for the continuing vocational training market in Luxembourg on four fundamental points:

- the funding of continuing vocational training by the company, by employees and by the State;
- the conditions of access to continuing vocational training for everyone;
- methods of protecting investment in continuing vocational training for companies to avoid poaching by non-training enterprises;
- certification of training modules.

Denmark considers that it is essential, if the SMEs are to take up the training opportunities available by the public authorities, to structure training provision in a more effective, more flexible and more customised manner thanks to better management of the market and increased competition between vocational training providers.

The "job rotation" projects are part of this approach, as are the "open workshop models" which are currently being developed and which will be the precursors of individualised training. The SMEs can send their employees for training at short notice. This approach makes for optimum use of the equipment of training establishments as the rotation of training takes place in a continuous and differentiated manner at the same time.

The importance of the regional dimension is illustrated by **Finland** with its regional bureaux which are answerable to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and which provide counselling and service on the basis of a range of programmes such as "*ProStart, Kunto*", *etc.*

Germany:
Lern-Netzwerk **- a CVT network for Bavaria**

Bavaria is currently setting up a ***Lern-Netzwerk,*** i.e. A CVT network, using modern information and communication technology, for medium-sized metal-working and electronics companies. This model project involves the preparation installation of distance teaching applications in local firms. The aim of the network is to move the burden of in-house training, outside .Rural areas which have problems of access to CVT provision are a particular focus.

Another interesting initiative is that undertaken in the Flemish-speaking part of **Belgium** and which is based on a government agreement spanning 1995-99 and involving financial incentives to encourage the investment of private and Community finds in vocational training measures at company level.

Lastly, multi-media teaching and, to some extent, distance teaching are frequently mentioned as ways of catering for the specific needs of the SMEs.

Italy:
A new strategic role for continuing training

Legislation L236/93 introduced a contribution of 0 .03% of the enterprise wage bill for the development of vocational training. The recent 1996 agreement, concluded between the government and the social partners, further specifies the role and position of vocational training.

" *continuing training provides a new strategic role for training and affirms the citizen's right to*

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qualifications and to the enrichment of their proper vocational competencies."

- The agreement specifies general goals for creating the right conditions for ensuring access to lifelong learning. The agreement foresees:

- The gradual introduction of a levy of 0.03% of the wage bill to develop continuing training in co-operation with the social partners.

- Creation of new possibilities of adaptation by insertion of national level agreements and annual plans of the social partners, into the level of the enterprise.

- Reaffirmation of the right to education and training for adults, by optimising the current contractual instruments on training leave and sabbaticals.

Reorientation , remotivation, and training measures, which address the needs of the unemployed and those threatened by exclusion, and also the need to improve of the employment services are also foreseen.

A further very interesting innovation is the establishment of alternating training and work, (work and apprenticeship contracts), introduced within a clear and coherent strategy of promotion and support of employment. The double status of these contracts helps in making the distinctions between initial vocational training and continuing training at work, less limiting.

Another trend is to set up institutions, very often quasi-public, to provide support and backup for these companies in order to promote more 'tailor-made' solutions. In 1992, **Luxembourg**, for instance, set up on a legal basis the INFPC, a national institute for the development of continuing vocational training. Similarly, **Ireland**, on the basis of the labour law of 1987, set up the FAS (national training and employment authority) in order to promote the training of employees in **Ireland** and provide the training needed by unemployed persons. A similar approach is being pursued in **Portugal** where tripartite public institutions such as the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEVT) or the Observatory for Employment and Vocational Training, provide support for the business sector in human resource planning and in implementing a vocational training policy.

National strategies on these points, especially in the Cohesion countries, have in many cases drawn in the support of the European Social Fund, especially in relation to the impact of industrial change on workers skills. Objective 4 of the structural funds in particular (including the ADAPT Community Initiative), is providing about 4 Bio ECU during 1994-99 for training and re-training actions, development of training systems, and mechanisms for the anticipation of the skills and training implications of industrial change.

1.2.3 Access taking account individual requirements, Access to training through individual initiatives

Matching training to individual worker requirements is another crucial factor. It raises several problems. How to stimulate continuing vocational training by companies while at the same time taking account of the specific situation of the workers of these companies (Objective 3)? How to allow workers to assess their training requirements (Objective 7)? and lastly what opportunities are there for individuals to organise their training on their own initiative?

It must of course be pointed out that throughout the Member States every employee can at his/her own expense enrol for all sorts of training. This training very often corresponds to leisure activities and is organised by cultural associations or local education authorities. Language training is one example. Other typical examples, which have long tradition, are activities organised by the *Volkshochschulen* in **Germany** or the *Open Universities* in the **United Kingdom** or the **Netherlands**, adult education in **Luxembourg** and **United Kingdom**, the second qualifying path way in **Austria** or the senior citizens university in **France**. Such cases can entail vocational training and may link with occupational activities but will not necessarily have a direct impact on career progression.

In the UK, within the Employee Development Scheme, employers (c. 800 companies) provide additional funding for employees to undertake a learning activity of their choice. These schemes are often set up by employers as a means of attracting people who generally get least training.

It should be noted that the above analyses only covers vocational training activities, from the

point of view of the occupational needs of the individual. It is worth pointing out that the tangible opportunities for personal initiative in completing one's training are small. More often than not the training decision lies with the employer.

Training leave as an instrument to promote access to continuing training

Training leave is commonly presented as part of the main arrangements in favour of access to continuing training. Some Member States thus provide for the possibility of non-active status in the form of training leave on a legal basis (**France, Belgium, Finland, Sweden,** certain Länder in **Germany**, etc.) or through collective agreements (**Denmark,**).

Non-active status may take the form of training days, or be based on more ambitious models such as systems of job rotation as practised in certain Scandinavian Member States.

Not all configurations of training leave are a success. **Belgium**, for instance, looks to improve the efficiency of its paid training leave system which was set up by the Law of 22 January 1985. The provision has therefore been amended by fixing a ceiling on remuneration payable and a reduction in the number of hours of leave. There are also strong reservations on training leave in **Germany**.

In **Denmark**, the right to (unpaid) training leave for a maximum of two weeks yearly emerged from the 1993 agreements in the private employment sector. Under agreements with the State, training leave on full pay was introduced in 1993 and 1995. Also noteworthy is the system of 150 hours in **Italy**. This measure dates back to the 1970s and provides for an hourly budget for each worker for his own training. Those targeted are mainly the less qualified. Similarly, the 1992 agreement in **Spain** provides for a system of paid training leave to cater for individual needs.

Well-established in certain countries, but openly criticised in others, paid training leave as a way of increasing access to training is debated in Member States. Discussions were launched in September 1995 in **the Netherlands** on "Utility leave: an investment for the quality of work and care in the community". The Employment Foundation has yet to give its opinion on career breaks. The same is true in **Luxembourg**. An opinion has been drafted by the Economic and Social Council for final Government consideration.

Assessment of skills

The up-and-coming trend is towards recognition of skills. Mention has already been made of the **UK's** NVQs/SVQs. In 1997 the current assessment bodies will be merged into a "*Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*", with a view to generating consistency and quality in the approach to academic and vocational qualifications.

Norway, in the meantime, has just set up skills assessment systems which provide certification irrespective of how the skills were required. The emphasis here is placed on the development of models for the assessment of skills as the basis for improving access to vocational training activities. **Italy** stresses the worthwhile nature of a Community project: "individual skills portfolio".

In **Belgium,** promotion of civic teaching is used to develop a system of tests which will make it possible to enhance the skills acquired through work experience and to help workers attest to their real level of qualification. In **Norway**, with the reform of the higher secondary cycle, the importance of the 'master tradesman's certificate has also been increased. It is thus possible to have one's level of skill recognised on the basis of occupational experience in a practical or theoretical branch.

Ireland has set up a national system, TEASTAS, designed to create a national certificate structure covering all non-university higher-level training and continuing training.

Developments covering definition of individual requirements and the assessment of such requirements are leading to the establishment of centres for the assessment of individual training requirements. A approaches exist, the most common being skills assessments.

In certain Member States like **Belgium** and **Luxembourg**, training establishments have started offering this type of service to the business sector and to individuals. The trade unions apparently are increasingly supporting this approach, particularly in the case of people who have just lost their jobs.

In order to facilitate the assessment of workers' continuing vocational training requirements, **France's** law of 31 December 1991 introduced the skills assessment as an instrument at the service of companies and workers alike. Nearly five years on, this service is gradually gathering pace in the world of vocational training, particularly with the availability of the opportunity for employees to have their skills assessment funded individually and outside working time.

Denmark has adopted a slightly different tack. Since 1995 the AMU[11] has been proposing a completely new type of activity which consists of clarifying individual skills, an activity which can be incorporated into the follow-up of long-term training leading to qualifications. Similarly, as previously mentioned, "open workshop courses" have been introduced, and these start with an assessment of the levels and continue with an tailored learning.

The TECs[12] and the LECs[13] in the **UK** have, in the interests of regular assessment of training requirements, instituted programmes such as *Gateways to Learning* in order to have a network of guidance organisations - the purpose being to promote supply and demand for guidance. Another programme, *Skill choice*, uses a system of a recognition and accreditation of qualifications and prior guidance measures.

1.2.4 Access and retraining of workers

In the interests of a proactive approach, **Finland's** Law on the contract of employment stipulates that employers must organise training if this makes it possible to avoid redundancy or laying off an employee by redeployment within the company. In **Sweden** the Employers' Organisation and the General Labour Confederation have stepped up their arrangements and set up a reserve fund to increase training which target workers facing a risk of unemployment.

By way of illustration, **France** provides support for projects which are part of a strategic development approach. These are negotiated mostly between the social partners at occupational branch level where the questions of modernisation and competitiveness can be raised globally and coherently. They run for several years so as to form part of training within a medium term plan. They can also be concluded at local level, particularly with inter-sectoral organisations as part of a local economic development approach. The system is based on State aid.

Portugal has introduced a number of programmes and actions to adapt the active population to technological and organisational change, and to develop retraining of unemployed persons or employees facing the risk of unemployment. Such action is usually prepared jointly by the companies and by the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training and is supported by the second CSF and the multi-annual employment programme.

In the **United Kingdom** the promotion of training is done at sector level through the *Industry training organisations (ITO)*. They are intended to monitor future skills and training requirements, develop occupational standards and provide encouragement for employers with regard to training.

The **Netherlands** ESF Objective 4 especially targets less-qualified workers and activities to encourage this group of employees to participate in training.

1.2.5 Access to training for a specific target groups

It is very significant that the Member States appear to have opted for specific programmes targeting population groups like the least-qualified, women, young people and the long-term unemployed.

ESF Objective 4 programmes in seven countries specifically target those most at risk of exclusion from ongoing training. Here we see for example (i) the **French** accent on identifying those most at risk, whether because of their low qualification level, those whose job functions are disappearing, and those at mid-career point; (ii) the **Dutch** targeting non-indigenous workers with language

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[11] AMU = Adult Vocational Training.

[12] TEC = Training and Enterprise Council.

[13] LEC = Local Enterprise Council.

weaknesses in view of the increasing importance of communication skills in our complex industrial environment; and (iii) the **Finnish** targeting outdated skills within the older age groups.

Specific measures targeting the least qualified

All Member States are introducing specific measures and specific teaching tools targeting a range of groups, e.g. the functionally illiterate, low-schooled adults or the disabled. The steps taken to promote access to vocational training reflect a concern among political decision-makers and workers' representatives alike to give priority to the vocational training of the least-qualified categories. The trade unions are also anxious to give preferential access to training to workers facing the risk of unemployment or workers whose employability is low. In 1995 **Finland**, for example, set up a tripartite committee to find answers which would involve all the players.

The **UK** government feels that the acquiring of basic skills is the foundation for satisfactory subsequent occupational development. Substantial financial resources are earmarked annually to fund initiatives and infrastructures, under the aegis of the Department of Education and Employment. The aim is to encourage the acquisition of basic skills by population groups facing the risk of exclusion from the labour market. The *Basic Skills Agency* is one such example, the idea being to establish a national strategy to rise to this challenge. This initiative was in 1995 expanded to cover basic training at the place of work for the unemployed and for young people, and also includes a *Family Literacy Initiative*.

Along similar lines, the measures, programmes, initiatives, regulations and legal provisions in the various Member States, e.g. support schemes for the unemployed in **Belgium** or the personalised teaching workshops in **France**. Their task is to provide every school-leaver additional, general or technological basic or individual training leave for those who wish to obtain a basic qualification.

Substantial effort is being made in **Denmark** inter alia to improve the living conditions of people with reading difficulties. The National Education Ministry now offers reading tuition free of charge to these people.

There are short-term and long-term measures, updating of knowledge or basic qualifications, which are part-financed from the Structural Funds, notably **Portugal**.

In the **Netherlands** the combination of training and working experience is considered a very effective instrument in the effort to upgrade qualifications. For example, a level will be created under elementary apprenticeship, the assistant-level, because this can be helpful for the least qualified to attain an elementary level (notably, with a view to their position in the labour market).

Specific measures targeting women

Specific measures for this target group are organised generally by the public authorities, local agencies, social institutions or third sector organisations, and are intended to create appropriate structures to facilitate the access and involvement of women in vocational training. These measures include vocational guidance, preparation for working life and the organisation of child-minding facilities.

In most Member States, these measures are publicly funded and/or part-funded by European programmes and initiatives targeting women facing the risk of unemployment, unemployed women, and women in the process of being occupationally integrated.

There are different models for the management of all these actions. **Belgium**, for instance, has adopted legislation in this area (Royal Decrees of 14.07.87 for the private sector and 27.02.90 for the public sector), and in **France** equal access for men and women to vocational training is one of the points on which the social partners are obliged to negotiate at least every five years. The **UK** and **Ireland** also earmark special funds for the development of programmes for women returners, including child-minding arrangements for parents who intend to return to work, and loans to women to pay the cost of courses and *crèche* facilities. In **Norway**, equal opportunities is one of the fundamental premises of the law on adult education. Spain has set up an institute to address issues specifically affecting women in this area.

Ireland:
Action programme targeting women initiated by the FAS

The National Training and Employment Authority (FAS) first started up its action programme for women in 1990 in an endeavour to redress the labour market balance which was largely unfavourable to women.

It has subsequently been adapted yearly. The programme sets out to:

1. **improve and broaden out the range of job opportunities open to women;**
2. **help women to solve specific problems they face on the labour market;**
3. **minimise all existing practices which hitherto generated inequality between men and women.**

The FAS 1995 action programme shows that the involvement of women in training and employment programmes has increased everywhere and a further progress has been made in new areas of training and in the involvement in employment in collective enterprises. In 1996-97 the FAS will continue to adopt measures to increase the take-up by women of training in areas where they are under-represented and to raise the current level of women's qualifications.

Some Member States, e.g. **Denmark**, point out that the debate on equal opportunities for men and women is changing nature. The general level of training shows that women are now better trained than men. However, **Denmark** continues to organise a whole range of actions targeting specifically the female public as part of general basic training for adults, e.g. day schools for women, open data consultation rooms, etc. **Finland** shares this analysis. Equality would appear to be ensured under support measures for social policy.

It should also be noted that Member States generally co-finance actions in favour of women's access to vocational training by way of the structural funds whose regulations envisage and reinforce respect for and promotion of the principle of equal opportunities between men and women. Complementary to this, the NOW strand of the EMPLOYMENT Community Initiative is also making an important contribution in this area.

Specific measures targeting young people

Three major trends emerge here: the development of types of apprenticeship to encourage occupational integration, increased responsibility devolved to the regions and to local level, and measures targeting companies which give young people contracts. Lastly, it is worth stressing that the concept of 'second chance' schools has got off the ground.

Encouraging access of and participation by young people having insufficient or inappropriate qualifications remains a major concern for all Member States, many of which have instituted reforms on apprenticeship in recent years which have often led to the introduction of new sandwich training channels, and to the raising of the age of the apprentices. One of the trends to watch is the gradual opening out of the apprenticeship system to all levels of technical diplomas, particularly at post-secondary level. In most cases, the education world makes proposals on the access of young people to vocational training, but tangible achievements are increasingly often obtained with the support and co-operation of the business world.

Germany:
Action programme targeting young talent/grant-holders

In 1991 Germany introduced the *Begabtenförderung berufliche Bildung* programme for skilled young persons and young employees who are particularly good at their jobs. Upon completion of their VT under the 'dual system', those awarded a *Begabtenförderung* grant can broaden their occupational knowledge according to their requirements through continuing VT (e.g. language tuition, computer skills, politics, economics).

Spain encourages in-company placements as a way of promoting the occupational integration of young people.

The third sector, it has to be said, also plays a vital role when it comes to young people, by contributing to the promotion of various solutions for combining work experience and socio-occupational integration.

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In this way several projects in the various Member States seek to set up procedures for vocational guidance and training leading to qualifications for jobless young people, many of them from high-risk inner-city areas. Procedures to develop and improve training and integration pathways for young people through specific vocational curricula also exist.

Other Member States, e.g. **Greece**, have introduced education and training channels of the 'second chance' type, targeting young people who left the school system without any basic qualifications.

The Brussels region in **Belgium** has started up a system of vocational transition payments in order to encourage the recruitment and training of job seekers aged under 26 who have no higher secondary school qualification or who have been unemployed for a minimum of six months.

This trend has also emerged in **France**, where there are specific measures for young people aged 16-25 through the 'qualification contract' intended for those who were unable to obtain a qualification during their school careers or whose level of qualification would not get them into a job.

Many Member States have specific measures to ensure that young people who had no training can do so in order to give them occupational skills. These measures are part of broader employment programmes, e.g. **Denmark**.

There has been a wide range of approaches developed on this front in the **UK**, which in 1995 launched the *Modern Apprenticeship*, an initiative based on a partnership between the government and the business sector with the objective of improving the occupational, technical and managerial skills of young people. It is planned to start up a programme entitled "*Relaunch Strategy*" in 1997 to encourage young people from age fourteen upwards to take part in local partnership projects, to encourage them to stay in, or come back in to learning.

Under the *Youth Work Guarantee Act* in the **Netherlands**, people under 23 who have been unemployed for a period of six months are offered a temporary job, training or a combination of both. In order to make the apprenticeship system more attractive to companies as the intake dropped considerably since 1991, a new measure was introduced in 1996. The measure provides companies with a grant for every apprentice they agree to train. This is paid indirectly by means of a reduction in the social insurance contribution for the apprentice.

In **Italy** legislation on apprenticeship is in progress, which establishes a link between external training leading to a qualification, and training within the enterprise with the help of a tutor. State aid is limited to seeking evidence that training is taking place.

Specific measures targeting the long term unemployed

Finland, for instance, notes that vocational training for workers is a major tool in an active employment policy which it is financing through the employment administration.

The long-term unemployed or unemployed persons aged over 50 have been the focus of special attention. Several programmes attempt, as in **France**, to combine training measures with occupational integration measures, more often than not through work placements in companies. This is one way of acquiring new qualifications, which in many cases are basic qualifications, combined with some work experience. Specific measures have also recently been introduced for the supervisory categories.

Finland two years ago introduced the KEKO training whereby an unemployed person can undertake 6-9 months training while continuing to receive his/her unemployment benefit. This is undertaken within a regional context., The worker can thus have the advantage of a grant to pursue studies under a training and redundancy fund. A recent trend seeks to encourage employers, through financial incentives, to recruit people or job seekers, by getting them to contribute to their training. In **Belgium**, **France** and the **Netherlands**, employers can benefit from a reduction in social charges in the event of recruitment of unemployed persons.

In **Denmark**, special attention is also given to training which provide unemployed persons with skills. The Danes concentrate on the quality of such training, the way in which this action is co-ordinated and on individual action plans. This basic approach goes hand in hand with a range of facilities. Another feature is that the fight against unemployment is increasingly regionalised and placed in the hands of regional and local

institutions. In **Denmark**, the labour market regional councils decide on which facilities to use. These include the job rotation or substitution system which is often used in **Denmark** and the Scandinavian States, **Sweden** and **Norway**.

Greece and **Luxembourg** have vocational training centres whose tasks include the provision of long or short-term training programmes, training actions leading to a qualification or retraining actions, school actions and work placements. In many instances, the activities undertaken in this area by the public authorities are supplemented by measures by the employers federation, the trade unions or the third sector associations. Specific arrangements for certain types of unemployed persons are usually provided for. The same is the case of **Portugal** where the second CSF provides for support measures for the reintegration of unemployed people on the labour market, such as the INTEGRAR programme which is designed to achieve the socio-occupational integration of long-term unemployed people through specific or additional training actions. This second CSF also makes provision for specific measures for other target groups facing the risk of being excluded from the labour market.

Several initiatives have been set up in the **UK** in order to increase the level of employability of unemployed people. An example is the *Training for work* programme which targets the long-term unemployed and the objective of which is to find them a job, improve their occupational skills, and provide them with a mix of skills which includes those linked with national and vocational qualifications. A similar approach *Community employment* has been pursued in **Ireland**. It is based on neighbourhood projects for unemployed people and provides part-time jobs mainly for the long-term unemployed and gives an opportunity for all those who are the worst placed in relation to the labour market.

In the **Netherlands**, a couple of measures has been taken to improve the labour market position of the long-term unemployed. Within the Employment Service there is a measure '*Sectoral Training for Unemployed Grants Scheme*' (BBSW) which provides grants to enable jobseekers to train for work in specific sectors. The sector in question has to provide a training plan to the Central Employment Service Board.

Some Member States also have programmes designed to provide training and assistance to unemployed persons intending to set up in business.

1.2.6 Access and the new partnerships

This developments are characterised by decentralisation as reflected by increasing responsibility at the regional and local levels. It entails adjusting vocational training provision to the specific requirements of the regional and local companies and also the setting up of appropriate arrangements and infrastructures. The advantage of this approach is also that it permits much closer co-operation between the local authorities, the training organisations, the teaching and research establishments and companies, particularly the SMEs. For many Member States, the approach also means setting up regional training networks, partly in order to provide the information and instruments needed for the smooth development of training measures in companies.

Decentralisation of continuing vocational training is thus a major trend in **Germany**.

Furthermore, continuing vocational training as a factor of regional and local development naturally fits into the framework of the general instruments represented by the regional vocational training development plans. Analysis of local requirements and dissemination of information are tasks which in certain countries, e.g. **France** and **Greece**, are carried out by regional employment observatories generally jointly organised and funded by the government and the regional authorities. The structures also have to act as back up organisations for training establishments in order to match up training provision and the specific local and regional requirements.

The active labour market policy in **Denmark**, **Finland**, **Sweden**, **Norway**, **Italy**, **Belgium** and the **Netherlands** shows a similar trend towards a regionalisation with the setting up of regional labour market councils combining occupational integration measures and training. These councils are more often than not made up of representatives of the social partners, the municipal authorities and prefectures, and their task is to organise the efforts being made on the labour market front. These committees ensure that companies have the labour force they need and contribute to preventing and reducing long-term unemployment. The arrangements available

include training, guidance and preparation for employment.

Denmark:
Social partners' initiatives

In order to step up continuing training in the SMEs, the social partners in Denmark have set up a range of training planning models such as "AIDA", "VIRUM", "MEKHON" or "SUM" through collective agreements.

The trade unions have thus developed and funded jointly the SUM concept (strategic development of labour), an instrument to analyse qualifications and training planning in companies. The SUM method is frequently used as a planning tool in Denmark. A secretariat has been set up to sell these tools and also to train "SUM consultants" who are selected from the trainers of the vocational teaching establishments and the AMU centres before receiving specific training and then sent to companies where they propose training planning in order to adjust provision as closely as possible to actual requirements.

The SUM system is based on two fundamental principles:

1. co-operation between management and employees and jointly taking on board of the SUM method,

2. a relentless drive to bring the SMEs and training providers as close together as possible through the SUM consultants and thus set up partnerships. These consultants are also called upon to take part in creation of networks of SMEs so that the latter can together make the best use of the training on offer.

Similarly, **Portugal** has set up a network of local consultants to promote the industrial development of the SMEs through training programmes leading to qualifications adapted to their actual needs.

This same route is being followed by the **UK** through the setting up locally of the TECs/LECs which can adapt the national programmes instituted by the government to the local level, and even organise local measures which are particularly adapted to local requirements. In the Flemish-speaking part of **Belgium** new players are emerging on the scene, mainly private initiatives acting as an interface between the world of work on the one hand and the training organisations and teaching establishments on the other. Generally speaking, the establishment of networks is a major component in the building up of the vocational training system in **Flemish-speaking Belgium**, bringing together the activities of training organisations, teaching establishments and companies in order to provide added value through joint projects.

Flemish-speaking Belgium:
An example of inter-company training

Alcatel's further technical training *('postgraduate technique')* is primarily intended for highly qualified employees who have held a diploma for a number of years. This intensive and comprehensive programme gives them the opportunity to update their knowledge as a function of what is taught today in higher education and universities. The training is module-based: those taking part themselves decide on the programme they wish to pursue as a function of the subject area selected. These cycles are also accessible to the employees of other companies and may be undertaken on the spot or on a distance basis through a video-conference system.

1.2.7 Access through new technologies

The principle of open, flexible and individualised training is on the political agenda in nearly all the Member States as a way to improve access to training to a broader public. Efforts are being stepped up to develop self-training methods at the place of work and open and distance learning, making increasing use of new technologies such as computer-assisted teaching or multimedia learning systems. Needless to say, the potential of an Internet-driven learning system is being analysed more or less everywhere, along with other measures to incorporate the new technologies in the distance learning process.

Accordingly, several Member States (**Norway, UK, Flemish-speaking Belgium**,...) have put distance education and the use of information

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technologies at the top of their agendas. The **Finnish** Directorate General of Education undertook between 1991 and 1995 an ambitious project (OPINNET) aimed at establishing more open, more flexible and more technology-attuned environments for adult training leading to qualifications.

In order to secure the success of the introduction of new technologies into the training process, the development of teaching and learning methods which are more appropriate is a concern which is being taken over particularly by distance teaching and training organisations which already exist, as in **France**, where mention should be made of the work of the National Distance Teaching Centre. This establishment organises basic training courses and continuing vocational training courses. Many Member States have just set up specific institutions with this in mind. In this connection. It can thus be claimed that virtually all training practitioners employed in teaching research centres, technological transfer establishments, teaching, universities and trade unions, are busy designing computer-assisted courses or courses designed using other multimedia techniques. From a technical organisation point of view, it is worth mentioning endeavours made to make available premises equipped with computers which are open to everyone and which have software suitable for self-tuition, as in **Belgium** with the FORESPACE in Brussels which provides opportunities for computer-assisted self-tuition for workers and job seekers in the region. In addition, the Flemish Ministry of Education intends to overhaul distance teaching by supporting a new open university consortium bringing together the main higher education establishments in order to develop a new approach and a new methodology in this field.

In **Denmark**, the Centre for Technology-Assisted Training (CTU) set up in 1995 provides support for the transition of training establishments, collecting and disseminating information and experience, and contributing to the emergence of decentralised expertise. The AMU system has developed and implemented an extensive training system in and with information technology. The development of new multimedia and innovatory tools is in many instances supported by the public authorities and recognised as an advantage when it comes to earmarking funds, as is the case in **Greece**.

Many sectors of activity are also developing tools which use the new technologies. The **services sector**, particularly with **banks** as in **Luxembourg** and **Portugal**, is a good example.

The preference in **Portugal** is to introduce new technologies as training tools, particularly as part of the new training programme for the SMEs or through the employment and vocational training institute by setting up new teaching software and multimedia methods.

Since the early 1980s, the **UK** has also been building up an efficient open and distance training infrastructure in order to broaden out the opportunities for access to distance training by establishing wider provision in support of training investment both by companies and by individuals. The main examples are the *National Extension College*, *The Open College* and *The Open University*. The British Government is also provided support in recent years for a large number of research initiatives and programmes in order to further open up distance learning opportunities, particularly by using the new technologies in an educational context.

1.3 Diverging positions of the social partners

The Recommendation introduced a major innovation as regards methods. In parallel with the Member States, the social partners organisations within the Community social dialogue are also involved in the process of preparatory reports for the Commission assessment.

Procedures

ETUC and UNICE-CEEP - have quite independently defined the process and methodology for their report. It is interesting to note that arrangements for consultation of the national organisations have been made for employers and employees organisations alike.

This consultation process has proved largely positive and the reports drawn up at Community level provide useful pointers in appreciating the links between Community action and the development of action by the social partners at Member State level or, to a lesser extent, company level.

Moreover, the two reports have sought to make the best use of the common tool introduced at the Community level in the form of the social dialogue support arrangement on vocational training (cf. Chapter 1). The results of this arrangement have been used to frame the assessment of the social partners on sensitive points concerning developments in continuing training arrangements, notably in areas of common interest defined by the arrangement, and in case where promising cases of innovation can be highlighted.

It has to be borne in mind, however, that information on the analysis of initiatives by the social partners within each Member State could not be comprehensively and systematically collected for this first reporting exercise, even though significant innovations would seem to be emerging.

ETUC report

- With regard to the impact of the Recommendation, the ETUC concludes that "*in most Member States, the Council Recommendation is not well known*". It also points out that it saw no evidence of specific government steps to implement the Recommendation. As regards the nature of the Community instruments, the ETUC states: "*the Recommendation has had no direct impact*".

- With regard to the general appreciation of trends, the ETUC report concludes: "*in most Member States, no real progress concerning access to training seems to have been made*". The ETUC recognises that there is a greater level of awareness on the issue but that access has not become a common and strategic political question. The report adds that in many Member States, "*public funds for training activities have been cut back so that conditions for access have deteriorated*".

- On a positive note, however, the ETUC states that "*in some countries important movements with impact to improve access to training have taken place*". The report thus identifies around 10 countries (**S, DK, Finn, E, F, A, D, P**) in which it can be considered that significant initiatives have been taken on promoting access.

- The ETUC report also observes that in certain sectors or at company level, there has been increased take-up of training. The report here makes a direct link with changes in work organisation at company level and the general trend towards quality. The report quotes a number of agreements signed at company level which tend to confirm this.

The enterprises cases (support arrangements)

- **Unibon-Italy**
  Continuing training requirements linked to the application of ISO 9 000 standards and keener competition. Application of a multiplier principle whereby the group leaders develop quality ideas and pass on their experiences to the members of the daily working groups.

- **Länsförsäkringer Uppsala (Sweden)**: as part of a new client-and quality-orientated configuration of work organisation, all the employees of the department concerned undergo informal continuing training and even organise this process themselves.

- **ABB - Motorenfabrik (Denmark)**: securing competitiveness by introducing working groups which manage themselves by developing skills which overlap and by making training mandatory for all employees.

- The report also highlights the fact that arrangements to assess employee training needs are inadequate in most Member States, and that the opportunity to obtain formal qualifications or some kind of - even partial - recognition of achievement is an essential factor of motivation for and take-up of training.

- The report also reviews point by point the results for each of the Recommendation's 15 objectives. The salient features of this detailed examination are:

  - only a minority of companies implement formal training plans, but there are many experiments to prepare such plans and involve the employee;
  - the existence of support or incentives for the SMEs or companies undergoing industrial change;
  - the existence, particularly at regional and local levels, of information on the

requirements of companies and workers, even if partnerships to analyse these requirements are still far few and far between;

- arrangements exist to provide a flow of information to workers but they need to be made more widespread and more efficient;
- the inadequacy, particularly in the case of employees, of arrangements to assess individual requirements;
- all too frequently the vision of the links between training and changes in work organisation is excessively narrow;
- promising developments on training and teaching methods;
- a broadly shared concern for training the least qualified even if things are still slow to move;
- substantial effort to promote equal opportunities in continuing training;
- there are still considerable problems of access for young people who have no qualifications and no jobs;
- a decline in public training endeavour in respect of unemployed persons; the good example of the practice of job rotation;
- an intensification of transnational co-operation on continuing training, stressing the problems for individual workers in gaining access to transnational courses.

Denmark: job rotation

With the Danish model of job rotation, employees following a continuing training course are replaced by job seekers recruited on a fixed term basis. This arrangement applies both under the company training plan and under the various opportunities for employee leave (parental leave, training leave and sabbatical leave).

The procedure involves giving an unemployed person the job of a person undergoing training for the duration of the training. The objective is twofold: firstly to facilitate the task of workers wishing to take part in training and secondly to give unemployed persons the chance to replace a worker when the employee is undergoing training. These measures are funded either by direct grants or by reducing charges. But the fact remains is that it is mainly the public organisations which use the replacement system during training and preferably in the care and welfare sectors. The small companies in the private sector need to take on board the benefits of using this system of replacements.

As a general conclusion, the ETUC report identifies four major points with regard to follow-up:

- the progress achieved relates more to collective objectives of companies and not the individual needs of workers;
- the ETUC's renewed resolve to develop the European Social Dialogue on access to continuing training;
- in view of the low impact of the Recommendation, the Commission should be asked to submit a directive on access. This request is warranted by the developments and challenges Europe has to face: information society, new forms of work organisation, new technologies, the high level of unemployment and demographic change;
- Member States should be urged to support the social partners at the national level in establishing arrangements and conditions

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whereby open access to training may be achieved.

UNICE/CEEP report

- A general comment made by the employers' organisations is that "*considerable progress has been made both at national and European levels within the last decade*".

- The report of the employers organisation stresses the objective set out in their many statements and declarations in order to "obtain and maintain a highly skilled and motivated workforce". It also reiterates that the employers allocate "*a huge amount of time and resources in training throughout the working life of an employee*".

- The report also stresses that the pre-report consultations highlighted many examples of different types of national co-operation between employers, workers and public authorities to promote access, and stresses the benefits of working together in this area.

- The report points to the major contribution made by the joint opinions in this context and the fact that the most significant of these joint opinions relates to "*the ways of facilitating the broadest possible effective access to training opportunities*". The employers consider that this joint opinion is a framework within which current and future progress on access to continuing training can be achieved.

- However, the report by the employers organisation also stresses that the scope of the Council Recommendation was very limited and had no influence on the substantial efforts made by the employers. The latter nevertheless are encouraged to see that certain points of the joint opinion have been reflected in the Recommendation.

The consultation of the national organisations also provides useful pointers:

- It is generally agreed that training is "*an essential part of a company's strategy to be competitive in the market place*". This trend is the result of market pressure, technological change and new working methods.

- There is a consensus that "*access to training has grown significantly throughout the Community*". **It needs to be emphasised that the general appreciations contained in the reports of the employers and the employees are diametrically opposed on the fundamental issue of how much progress has been achieved.**

- The employers' report contributes another fundamental dimension, i.e. the sectoral dimension. It concludes - on the basis of answers from the national federations - that many sectors have observed an increase in training both in public and private companies. In addition, the report finds that the deregulation in the public sector has led to increased competition and thus a rise in training.

- An important point in this analysis relates to the drafting of training plans and programmes. The report maintains that if training is to be effective there must be clear objectives set in the training plans and programmes. Employers accept the idea that work still needs to be done for these plans to cater simultaneously for the immediate requirements of the business sector and the longer term requirements of human resource development.

- Much progress seems to have been made on the information front, thanks to a variety of arrangements which include: "*training committees, co-operation committees, collective agreements, works councils, and internal and external publicity*".

- The problem of the SMEs is stressed, pointing out that they have only limited internal resources to develop training and that they depend largely on outside assistance to facilitate training. The answers from the national organisations show that much progress has been made on this: many Member States have taken action to transfer expertise in forecasting, planning and delivery of training to the SMEs. Other Member States have earmarked a percentage of the national budget to develop training in the SMEs even if the latter frequently are unaware of the opportunities available to them. The report stresses the communication drive needed here.

- The report stresses the endeavours made to cater for industrial change.

- The report stresses that the results obtained in tailoring training supply and demand to the

regional and local levels are deemed unsatisfactory. Steps have been taken to institute joint work between companies and training organisations, national and/or regional observatories have been set up and information campaigns have been conducted.

- Employees, according to the report, are increasingly becoming players in assessing their own training requirements. They can thus express their own needs, for instance through course assessments, surveys, in work circles and through performance assessments.

- Training, production and the organisation of work must be constantly interlinked, according to the report, which points out that training methods are an ideal pathway for progress in companies, particularly by opting for modular-based training, multimedia tools and implementation of on-the-job training opportunities.

- The problem of low-qualified workers is acknowledged. Employers accept the idea of specific actions to motivate and inform, but realise that much work is needed from those who have responsibilities for the development of individuals in this position to help them achieve their full potential.

- The employers recognise that much progress has been made in recent years in opening up access to training for women in employment, as well as for those wishing to return to the labour market or enter it for the first time.

  Employers are co-operating increasingly closely with training providers in developing training leading to recognised qualifications for young people. Similarly, the report stresses that employers are playing an active part in the occupational integration of the unemployed by offering broad access to training. A wide range of arrangements are used in this connection.

- The employers' report lays emphasis on five major issues they consider to be key issues in increasing access: the setting of quality standards, qualifications, vocational guidance, information and motivation.

The report offers conclusions and recommendations urging employers and Member States or the Commission to focus their attention on certain matters:

- **employers** should continue to develop access to continuing training as a strategic part of company policy, to continue co-operation with the Member States and relevant organisations in developing training policies, to explore and develop good practice with the support of the appropriate organisations nationally and at the Community level.

- **Member States** should develop suitable training policies in conjunction with the employers and provide support for co-ordination and dissemination of good practice nationally and at the European level.

- **the Commission** should work with the employers in opening up access to Community programmes, reduce the administrative burden, undertake studies for a better understanding and dissemination of good practice, follow up the work undertaken on vocational guidance and qualifications, and organise seminars on good practice with the support of the employers.

CHAPTER 2

Towards a more ambitious venture for the Union: accessing skills

2.1 Alternative to narrowing the major disparities within the Union

1. Since the Council adopted the Recommendation in 1993 much new data has emerged to enhance our knowledge of the actual continuing training situation Union-wide and in Member States. This information, which is helping to fuel a new Community debate in this field, comes from two sources mainly:

- the Community's Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), which was conducted in 1994, covered nearly 50 000 firms and provided - for the first time ever - comparable statistics on company policies in this field;

- the national reports, drawn up by Member States in the course of implementing the Recommendation, mostly containing figures taken either from specific national surveys or from the national part of the Community survey.

2. This report is limited to analysing the figures as they relate to the guidelines and aims set out in the Council Recommendation, i.e. general workforce access to continuing training, making continuing training more widespread in businesses, the nature and type of training used, differences by company size or activity sector.

CVTS: main features

This survey of continuing training in Europe was undertaken in 1994, taking 1993 as the reference year. Near-on 50 000 enterprises employing over 10 people were sample-surveyed, excluding the sectors of agriculture, public administration, health and education, households employing domestic staff and extra-territorial bodies. In companies which organised training for their staff in 1993, the survey collected data on the participants and the courses involved.

Average access rate

3. The main finding is that given the Recommendation's general aim, i.e. "*every worker of the European Community must be able to have access to vocational training and to benefit therefrom throughout his*

working life", a lot remains to be done in respect of access to continuing training. The fact is that in 1993 - the reference year for the European survey - **only slightly more than one worker in four (28%) underwent some kind of continuing training.**

Huge differences between Member States

4. It should also be noted that the abovementioned Community average conceals widely divergent national access rates, ranging from 13% (**P-GR**) to **43% (IRL).**

Position in terms of access	Member States
Above EUR 12 average	IRL, UK, F, DK
Near EUR 12 average	NL, B, D, L
Far below EUR 12 average	E, I, P, GR
EUR 12 average = 28%	

5. The 1994 Community survey covered the EUR 12 countries. It is therefore more difficult to obtain a corresponding picture of the situation in the three new member countries **Sweden, Finland** and **Austria**. Nevertheless, the national reports these three countries drew up as part of implementing the Recommendation contain some data based on national statistics showing that:

- **Sweden** and **Finland** are in the upper band of the first group of countries with participation rates greatly exceeding 40%[14];
- **Austria** is near the EUR 12 average.

Therefore, annual participation in continuing training varies from **one worker in eight** for Member States where access is not so well developed (**P-GR**), to **one worker in two** for Member States where access is more widespread (**S-FIN**).

Company policies

6. Further light is shed on these two general findings by the data available on company policies. After all, Objective 1 of Article 2 of the Recommendation itself refers to company implementation of training plans and programmes as a key element in determining access results.

   On average across the Union implementation of training plans and programmes by firms, in other words the existence of a corporate policy on continuing training, has not yet become a generally widespread feature. The Community survey indicates that **only 58% of companies - i.e. far less than two companies in three - can be considered to be of the "training" type**, irrespective of the kind of training provided.

Position in terms of corporate policy	Member States
More or less a general feature (3 firms in 4)	DK, D, UK, IRL
Near EU 12 average (about 2 firms in 3)	F, L, NL, B
Far below EUR 12 average (less than 1 firm in 3)	E, I, P, GR
EUR 12 average: 58%	

7. Companies' policies on continuing training should draw on a combination of different types of training courses - sub-contracted out, in-house, on-the-job, seminars, self-learning, etc.

   A more detailed analysis by type of training reveals that to about the same degree most enterprises (some 2/3 of "training" companies) either purchase outside training services or provide on-the-job training,

Company size - a decisive factor

[14] In EUR 15 terms therefore, the upper access band should be above 50%.

8. **In most Member States, the rate of access to continuing training is directly related to company size.** In EUR 12 terms, this rate varies progressively from 13% for firms with a workforce of from 10 to 49 employees, to 43% for firms with over 1 000 employees. **This means that a worker in a company with over 1 000 employees is three times more likely to take part in some type of training than a worker in a firm with 10 to 49 employees.**

   This considerable disparity is greater in countries such as **Italy** (from 2% to 31%), **Spain** (from 7% to 45%), **Portugal** (from 5% to 32%) or even **France** (from 11% to 54%). There is, however, one quite remarkable exception to the abovementioned positive correlation observed throughout the Union (EUR 12).This is **Denmark**, where the trend is turned upside down (a 37% access rate for companies with 10 to 49 employees compared with rates of around 34% for firms with 250 to 999 employees and a rate of 28% for firms with over 1 000 employees). Therefore, in **Denmark** company size does not appear to affect the probability of taking part in training[15].

Different sectoral policies

9. The analysis of the level of access to continuing training also shows important disparities between sectors. Service sector activities, **Banking, insurance, Post & Telecommunication, Water gas, Electricity** showed higher percentage of workers undertaking training 57%, 53% and 49% respectively. This contrasts sharply with the very low participation rate found in service activities such as **Hotels and Restaurants**, where the corresponding figure was approximately one in five. In the industrial sector the participation rate never rose above 35%, dropping to 15% in **Construction** and 8% in **Textiles**.

[15] The Danish report makes some very interesting points regarding SMEs.

2.2 Towards readjustment of priorities in vocational training policies

1. A great deal has changed since the Council Recommendation on access to continuing vocational training was adopted. The current and foreseeable economic, demographic and social developments in Europe make this issue much more important than it was when the Council adopted the Recommendation, even though only four years have elapsed since then.

An ageing active population

2. In this context, the impact of demographic and ageing trends among the active population in most European economies is a cause for further concern. The seriousness of these trends must be recognised, as must the need to radically rethink our present-day preconceived ideas on renewing the stock of available skills.

   More specifically, although one major factor at the moment - and in the future too - is to have young people with better training entering the job market, companies can no longer view this as the main way of injecting new skills. On the contrary, training approaches must be radically changed, with increasing attention being paid to older workers.

The importance of this is illustrated by the following three indicators:

a) the median age[16], of the labour force, which rose less than five years between 1960 and 1995 (from 31.4 to 35.4) will increase by nearly 10 years in the next 35 years (1995 to 2030) from 35.4 to 44.3[17].

b) the proportion of 20-29 year-olds in the active population remained unchanged between 1960 and 1995 (at approximately 27%) but will drop to 23% in 2030.

[16] The median age divides the population into two halves.

[17] Source: Eurostat.

c) 50- 59 year-olds currently account for one worker in five (20.8%) but this will increase to more than one worker in four (27.2%) in 2030.

Likelihood of access to training greatly depends on age

3. This deformation in the age pyramid of the active population has direct repercussions on the development of continuing training. As things stand now, the probability of gaining access to training falls sharply with increasing age. In spring 1994 the likelihood of 35-44 year-olds receiving job-related training in the four weeks prior to the survey was no more than 5.8%. The only countries with an access rate significantly higher than this Community average are **Denmark**, the **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom**, while in all other Member States - apart from **Germany** which is near the Community average - the probability of people in this age range taking part in some kind of study course or training is down to 1 or 2%[18].

Change in the nature of work itself

4. Changes in the nature of work itself is relentlessly continuing to become non-physical by nature. Ever increasing numbers of jobs are coming to involve more and more tasks connected with design, creation, manipulation of indicators or displays and the use of "smart" equipment. The debate about skills development now hinges on this trend. The way work is evolving means it is less definable in terms of trades or functions.

Towards firms which graft on skills

5. More and more firms are switching to the "learning environment" approach as the preferred way of enhancing skills in parallel with formalised training. On-going upgrading of skills therefore has a knock-on effect in the shape of changes in work organisation itself, job content and hierarchical structures.

[18] Labour Force Survey.

The resources

6. When discussing ways of enhancing continuing training, resources naturally play a primordial role, and it is very telling indeed that the social partners chose this as one of their topics of common interest within the social dialogue framework. It is clear that in order to meet the need for enhanced skills one cannot bank on a model which involves repeating or reproducing "schooling" during working life. The very development of our societies, as was shown by the White Paper on "Teaching and Learning - Towards the Learning Society", provides an opportunity we must grasp with both hands: "training" environments and, concomitantly, training resources are diversifying and multiplying and everyone must be given a chance to make full use of them.

   Our societies must proceed along this path if individuals' access to continuing training is to be improved, but this immediately leads on to the question of individuals assuming responsibility for defining their own needs, choosing the routes to take and selecting the arrangements which suit them best. This should also make it easier to examine in greater depth an issue which, in some people's minds, is a fairly sensitive one - that of how far individuals should contribute (in terms of time and/or money) to getting the best out of such access.

Austria: Savings account for training (Bildungskonto)

This scheme, launched in 1994, involves a personal education and training account. It forms part of a worker advancement scheme under the Upper Austrian federated budget instituted at the Land Government's initiative in collaboration with the social partners. Workers are entitled to a 50% reimbursement of the money spent on vocational training (maximum 20 000 shillings).

Towards a redivision of time

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7. The issue of time - and dividing it up between that spent working and that devoted to skill enhancement and training - is more delicate given the tentative nature of the debate about reducing and reorganising working hours. Nevertheless, certain company policies or certain agreements between the social partners make a link between rearrangement and/or reduction of working hours and time spent on training. Certainly, this approach is a "reservoir" of both flexibility and resources which ought to be explored. Increasing the time spent on training along lines yet to be defined, especially between the social partners, could be seen as a supple and flexible counterweight to reorganisation of working time and could make changes easier. It is important that the principle of creating a better balance between working and family life, which is of most relevance to women, is built in to whatever methods are adopted in this area.

Skill accreditation the key factor

8. The issue of validating skills acquired in different ways is central to this. In its White Paper the European Commission proposes introducing new approaches to skill accreditation which are directly accessible to/usable by individuals. This is not only a new avenue which ought to be explored in depth, both as regards design of the necessary instruments and their application as well, but also one which goes to the very heart of the matter. The aim is to give individuals the wherewithal for making progress in acquiring knowledge by measuring - in a supple and objective manner - the level they have reached.

The impact of the European Year of Lifelong Learning

9. The various activities pursued as part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning confirmed the tremendous importance European citizens accord this matter and helped get the message across on a broad front. Some important aspects should be noted here:

a) Backing from European citizens

The Eurobarometer survey conducted in connection with the European Year clearly reveals European citizens' keen interest in lifelong learning. **Seven Europeans out of ten wish to continue their education.** More than 80% of men and 70% of women believe that education and continuing training will very likely improve their job prospects. However, on the downside, the survey also shows that barely one European in five had undergone training in the past 12 months.

b) Time now ripe for action by those on the ground

And as regards lifelong learning directly, over 5 000 projects were undertaken, 2 500 events organised, 3 500 press articles published and 80 000 visitors to the Year's Internet site logged. The European Year really helped to lend a high profile to the issue of lifelong learning.

c) Plenty of original initiatives

A passing mention should be made examples which illustrate efforts to find innovative and original solutions, e.g. the "Learning Boutiques" in **Denmark**, "Adult Learners' Week" in the **United Kingdom** and the "Train to Knowledge" in **Finland**.

2.3 Increased role for competitiveness and employment

1. From an economic angle, reversal of the trend observed in the early 90s means we have to look for ways of underpinning the European economies' strong points in a general context of globalisation of economies and sharper competition. From the corporate and macro-economic angles it is now acknowledged that the quality of human resources in Europe, workers' skills and on-going uprating of such skills are decisive factors in achieving the productivity and competitiveness goals so vital if Europe is to maintain its positions on the world markets.

A key ingredient in competition

2. In its recent communication on competitiveness[19] the Commission referred to several factors decisive for performance and competitiveness, noting:

   "*Effective use of human resources remains a key element for gains in productivity and also for internal flexibility. An increasing volatility of employment bears the risk that the investment in human capital, notably through training, required for long-term growth and competitiveness will not take place. Training and continuous upgrading of skills is (and in future will become even more so) intangible investment with real and increasing benefit for industry and employers alike. A high skill, high quality, high productivity industrial strategy will enhance industry's competitiveness and employees' employability ...*"

Stronger link with employment

3. Analyses on the functioning of the European labour market also show a strong link between the level of skills and qualifications and the risk of unemployment, even if this relationship is not found in all Member States. Available findings show, among other things, that there is a threshold effect with regard to levels of education/training: completing higher level education or training only gives a marginal advantage in terms of protection against unemployment as compared with completing secondary level education. Furthermore, this relationship tends to diminish with regard to young people under 25 years. If, for 25-34 year-olds, gaining a vocational qualification reduces the risk of unemployment by half, for those, under 25 years, who have only completed compulsory education the risk of unemployment is only reduced by a third as compared to those who have only completed compulsory education and those who have completed secondary or higher education or training. Studies of long-term employment among older workers also show that there is

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19 "Benchmarking the Competitiveness of European Industry" - COM(96) 463 final.

20 Source: Report on Employment in Europe - 1995.

a very strong correlation between their having no (or low-level) qualifications and their chances of getting back into the job market.

Analysis of the multi-annual programmes adopted by Member States in applying the conclusions of the Essen European Council (December 1994) illustrates the efforts made by Member States to improve the quality and relevance of training for those in employment as well as for those without a job. Such analysis also shows that if raising the level and broadening the scope of workers' skills, notably those least qualified, can be considered as the most cost effective investment to prevent unemployment, it is not clear that enterprises and governments are sufficiently developing efforts to reskill those in work so as to respond to the growing demand for qualified labour. The Joint report on Employment also underlines the great effort still to be make for the employability of long term unemployed people of which only 7% at European Union level benefit from training activities.

4. Current debates on competitiveness and employment are placing more and more importance on the question of competencies, alongside the efforts being made to reduce indirect labour costs for non-qualified work. After the Florence European Council had set out the terms of a strategy of continually raising the level of competencies as the central element of an integrated strategy for competitiveness and employment, the Dublin European Council identified investment in human resources as one its recommendations for taking forward the strategy. It is of fundamental importance for Europe to see this process through.. Labour markets in Europe are still marked by relatively low mobility and decreasing recruitment of young people. Boosting the skills of the workers already *in situ*, who are on the front line of the socio-organisational changes now affecting enterprises, therefore forms a key element in competitiveness.

Skills - on the road to "flexibility/security"?

5. Here one should note the public debate around the notion of "flexibility/security", which endeavours to merge two crucial elements in labour market operation - labour market flexibility combined with maximum use of skills and human resources. Seen in this light, continuing training can be viewed as a decisive factor in bolstering individuals' employability. Some company policies and agreements are taking this path in order to turn access to continuing training into a factor for enhanced employability, something companies can give their employees even if they can no longer guarantee them a job for life.

Towards a services economy

6. The structural transformations taking place in Europe's economies moving them towards a service-based economy is also increasing the need for continuing training. As the Commission indicated in its Communication to the European Council headed "Putting Services to Work"[21], this move to a services economy involves an ever greater need of quality and professionalism. The future of the European service sector depends very much on the quality and permanent nature of the services on offer. In the Communication, the Commission pointed out that a key factor which distinguishes services from other sectors of the economy is that labour is generally the main input, adding:

"*The development and renewal of human resources is essential to maximise the employment potential that services offer. The ability of businesses to manage and release the potential of their workforce is critical for successful business development. 80% of high-growth businesses in Europe consider that employee training has played a crucial role in their success. Training will become even more important in the future ...*".

The advent of the "learning society".

7. The Commission's Green Paper, adopted in July 1996, **Living and Working in the Information Society: People First** (COM (96) 389) sought to promote awareness and stimulate debate on the labour market and social issues involved in the Information

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[21] Communication from the Commission to the European Council, CSE(96) 6 final of 27 November 1996.

Society. It recorded that there is universal agreement that the human resource base is fundamental in an Information Society, but there remains a skills gap and knowledge gap to overcome both in order to remain competitive and in order to promote equality and solidarity. Amongst the key areas for action it identified are:

- moving towards fostering learning skills (notably via more responsive partnership with economic life);
- achieving "learning employment", involving all people in work, especially those outside traditional full-time work in sizeable organisations;
- a special effort to re-integrate the unemployed through active policies for skills; and
- overall, the provision of a new architecture for lifelong learning, encompassing life inside and outside work (not forgetting life after retirement) and with a special emphasis on maintaining employability.

Sweden: Commission for Enhancement of Knowledge

In 1995 the Swedish Government set up the Commission for Enhancement of Knowledge, its task being to define the goals pursued in enhancing knowledge nationally as part of a strategy founded on lifelong learning. This Committee presented a preliminary report in which it presents the three pillars of its strategy: the training of young people, the development of skills and knowledge of adults, and lifelong learning.

For the adult learning objective, the aim is to provide an adequate training base for facilitating lifelong learning. This involves learning at primary and secondary level. With reference to the third pillar, the Committee proposes that each individual should have the possibility of participating in training through their whole life provided by the social partners. The State and local authorities should reinforce their co-operation with a view to intensifying their efforts on vocational training.

Netherlands: National debate on knowledge

Last spring the Netherlands launched a national debate on knowledge. The aim is to pinpoint the role knowledge could and should play in the years to come, so as to give Dutch citizens some idea of what the world will look like in 2010 and what they will have to know and be able to do in order to fit in to such a society.

We should not lose sight of the long-term aim, that of the learning society, the fundamental policy goal at the heart of all analyses of access to continuing training.

Through its White Paper on Education and Training published in November 1995 (*"Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society"*), the Commission set out to make European citizens stop and think about the type of society to be built in Europe and about the role of education and training therein, the aim being to draw up a blueprint for society based on goal-oriented choices and measures.

Starting from this premise, the White Paper indicated that the issue of access to knowledge and know-how would dominate developments in our societies. Social relations, labour relations, individuals' interaction with information networks and electronic media will be increasingly shaped by access to knowledge and know-how. Therefore, the way individuals relate to knowledge must be thought through afresh. Lifelong training is not just an element accompanying social change, it is the engine of change and the guarantee that citizens will not be left by the wayside.

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Chapter 3

Conclusions and guidelines

The findings in this report on implementation of the June 1993 Council Recommendation should provide all players with new food for thought and discussion.. The comparative reference data should assist in formulating their goals more precisely and update their policies.

In this chapter the Commission presents the main conclusions and findings drawn from the overall process the assessment of the implementation of the Council Recommendation of June 1993.

The conclusions deal mainly with the aims which are considered to be beneficial for pursuit at Community level, to consolidate positive action and to respond to the new challenges facing continuing training which have been identified in the report.

Nevertheless, in order to give some impetus to the debate, the Commission also provides a few pointers on the type of instrument which would help achieve each of the objectives.

3.1 Conclusions to approach

- The Commission views the exercise of drawing up national reports on access to continuing training very positively. It believes that the process of drawing up and comparing national reports constitute a useful initial step for national players, both as regards defining the "state of play" of the various systems and according them an initial ranking.

- The Commission welcomes the fact that in several Member States the exercise of drawing up the report engendered joint examination and debate by all the parties concerned, in particular the social partners, thus adding to the quality of the report. It believes that this national consultation process should be continued and enhanced.

- The Commission is very much in favour of the two-pronged approach whereby reports are drawn up not only by the Member States but also by the social partners' organisations at Community level. This dual approach gives a more comprehensive overview of developments in progress, allowing the various players to express their positions and thereby make a useful contribution. Further progress could be achieved in this connection through improved consultation at national level and by cross-fertilisation of the Member States' and social partners' reports.

- The Commission notes with satisfaction the rich variety - as the reports reveal - of new approaches and initiatives for promoting access to continuing training, both in terms of Member States' public policies and of the social partners' or corporate policies. It also notes the considerable impetus given to innovation and reform through the structural fund interventions, especially under Objective 4 and in Community Initiatives concerned with industrial change and on the other hand by Community programmes such as LEONARDO da VINCI and FORCE.

- The Commission is of the opinion that having quantitative indicators, especially those produced on a standardised basis through Community surveys like the CVTS[22], helps to improve very significantly our knowledge of the real situation regarding access across the Union and within Member States. It believes that this approach, should be continued and further perfected in respect of continuing training, that it should also be extended to cover the corresponding data on initial training soon to become available. During 1997, the Commission will publish the first keys statistics on vocational training. These two sets of data should provide a better idea of how training systems and practices are evolving in connection with lifelong learning.

- The Commission confirms the usefulness of co-operation and joint deliberation with the Member States on introducing a set of indicators, to be based on the initial findings of the training section contained in the employment "Tableau de Bord". It will be making proposals to this end in order to make the most of the programme of Community surveys on training which it intends to undertake.

- The Commission believes that the reports drawn up by the Member States, the social partners and the Commission should be viewed as joint capital and, as such, used (in line with an approach to be jointly defined) to improve the debate on continuing training between the various players and to seek out ways of improving access at all appropriate levels. For its part, the Commission will ensure that the corresponding analyses and results are published and the appropriate proposals made for making the best use of them.

- In the light of the results of the reporting exercise under review here, the Commission believes the Council Recommendation has proven itself to be a valid springboard from which to launch the Community approach on continuing training. Given the instrument's legal nature, the Commission believes the exercise has generated significant initial results.

- The Commission believes that this initial stage should lead to more substantial debate on the nature of the instruments required to pursue Community action in this field, instruments which will meet the challenge of ensuring improved access to continuing training. For its part, the Commission will submit proposals in this spirit.

3.2 Conclusions as to objectives

- The Commission shares the opinion that access to continuing training, and more broadly to lifelong training for all workers in the Union, is crucial in determining workers' opportunities for developing their skills and, as a corollary to this, companies' competitive edge and employees' degree of employability.

- With this in mind, the Commission believes that the level of access to continuing training for workers hitherto achieved is encouraging but marked by major inequalities. It feels that major efforts are required to raise the access level very significantly in order to meet the challenges thrown up by technical, economic, sociological and - probably most of all - demographic developments.

- The Commission notes that the huge diversity, if not to say tremendous disparity, observed on the access front - not only between the Union's member countries but also inside Member States among the different categories of companies and workers - causes harmful inequality between European workers in terms of the opportunities they enjoy for upgrading their

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[22] Continuing Vocational Training Survey of 1994

skills, and thus for protecting themselves against high risks of unemployment.

- The Commission, in keeping with its proposal concerning the European Year of Lifelong Learning, believes that promoting access to continuing training plays a vital role in attaining the broader goal of lifelong learning. Against this backdrop, it notes with satisfaction that several Member States have embarked along this path in a determined fashion.

- The Commission notes that the most significant initiatives and the extension of continuing training to include lifelong learning, are taking place in Member States which are already fairly well advanced in terms of access. This draws attention to the risk of a growing gap developing between the different countries, and the need to take this into account in structural fund programming, especially in relation to the Cohesion countries.

- The Commission notes the fact that, as a general trend, access to continuing training is being developed through diversification and exploitation of different opportunities and approaches rather than through focusing on one particular pathway.

- In the Commission's view, this overarching trend makes it more difficult to demonstrate and measure the progress achieved. Still, the Commission does not share the ETUC's opinion that no progress has been made on access to continuing training, nor UNICE's view that developments have been very favourable. It does believe that substantial progress has been made on access but that this is obscured by the diversity of approaches.

- The Commission believes that, while this trend to diversification provides an interesting opportunity for improving access for all workers, a special and substantial effort is needed to inform workers and enable them to make maximum use of the different access arrangements. In this context, the Commission views as very positive the different initiatives taken to enable workers to evaluate their skills.

- The Commission believes that all the players concerned, the social partners in particular, have a new role to play in regulating and overseeing the aforementioned arrangements to ensure, through various types of partnership, true equality of access to lifelong learning and new skills.

3. 3 Pointers for further action

In order to provide fresh fuel for discussions with the Community bodies concerned, the Commission provides below a - limited - number of pointers or guidelines it considers relevant for pursuing and advancing Community action in the continuing training field so as to meet the needs and challenges highlighted by the foregoing analysis.

Taking into account the discussions on this issue, the Commission will present, as conditions warrant and in due course, its proposals for turning these ideas into reality and introducing the legal and operational instruments required. To this end, the Commission will take account of proposals submitted in response to the White Paper entitled "Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society" and under the procedures for reviewing action programmes, Leonardo da Vinci in particular. The Commission will also rely on the results of research projects being taken forward within the programme for socio-economic research finalised in the 4th R&D programme which aim to identify and evaluate possibilities for lifelong learning.

Action guideline No 1

Finding

- While substantial progress has been made on access to continuing training, it is not enough, given the technological and socio-economic changes taking place. What is more, glaring inequalities are opening up in this process between the various categories of workers, depending on their country or type of company.

Community objective

- To press ahead in developing access to continuing training while narrowing inequalities in worker access so as to promote a Union-wide skill access strategy.

Action proposal

- To establish at Community level common conditions for facilitating access, also at sectoral level. These conditions will be established through consultations with the social partners at Community level which will also deal with the type of legal instrument required.

  Such consultation will aim in particular to ensure that the Community objective is extended to embrace access to skills, as set out in the Confidence Pact for Employment.

Action guideline No 2

Finding

- Despite the advances made and the introduction of promising innovations in the continuing training field, the various actors involved - firms, public authorities, social partners - are finding it difficult to formulate and implement a real strategy in this domain, something which is a must given that our world is changing, especially on the demographic side.

Community objective

- To provide the various actors, public authorities and social partners, with a permanent frame of reference which will keep them abreast of the continuing training access situation and the progress made, thus allowing them to size up the situation and define their goals better.

Action proposals

- To make the continuing training access reports a regular feature and simultaneously refine them so as to ensure that the national reports and the social partners' reports are uniformly drawn up on common criteria.

- To help enhance the said reports by periodically conducting the continual vocational training study (CVTS) and Community survey programmes on qualitative aspects as well as by the production of comparable statistical information on active employment policies covering notably training provided for unemployed people.

- The Observatory for industrial relations established within the Dublin Foundation could usefully complete the available information by way of collective conventions passed at Member State level.

- Frequency: it appears from the exercise undertaken on the basis of the 1993 Recommendation that having Member States draw up reports every three years, with an aggregated Europe-wide report being produced one year later, would be appropriate.

- This plan of action would allow us to "benchmark" (comparative evaluation) progress made in respect of access to continuing training, using an array of common indicators such as participation rate, company policies, innovations, etc. Such national and Community data would flow into the debate between the various players, thus helping them to determine new ways of promoting access as well as to utilise and harness Community data derived from progress in comparative evaluation of performance through Community-level benchmarking, sound national practices, initiatives by social partners to encourage debate between the players concerned. This benchmarking process should be taken forward in synergy with similar steps being taken by the Commission and Member States in the domain of competitiveness and employment.

Action guideline No 3

Finding

- The continuing training field is witnessing numerous innovations with the potential to enlarge access quite considerably. This trend will be boosted by development of new training or skill-evaluation tools based on the new information technologies.

- Furthermore, changes in work organisation and the introduction of different approaches to arranging working time are opening up new and major opportunities for developing novel forms of access to continuous training. In this context, the Commission's Green

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Paper on "Partnership on a New Organisation of Work" also deals with training aspects. Debates and initiatives will follow the adoption of the Green Paper and should take strong account of the training dimension of this issue.

- Nevertheless, the transfer of innovative practices inside the European market is neither fast enough nor intensive enough.

Community objectives

- To foster the development of a European industry covering multimedia tools for use in continuing training and individual evaluation of skills.

- To encourage the development of innovative practices and their incorporation into new approaches for accessing continuing training linked with changing industrial relations.

Action proposals

- The presentation in 1997 of a plan for action on vocational training *"Learning in the information society"*.

- To extend the pilot projects for skill self-accreditation to occupational fields involving both technical and horizontal skills.

- To give preference to transnational pilot projects centring on new access factors, in particular rearrangement of working hours and new work organisation methods; to exchange approaches and to try out - transnationally - new approaches to factors likely to contribute substantially to widening access, viz.:

  1. Projects linking development of access with adaptation/reduction of working hours, preferably involving industrial sectors.

  2. Projects linking new types of work organisation with development of access, in particular through individualised training-and-work contracts, preferably involving innovative companies.

In the Commission's view, the complex of analysis and guidelines for action which have been developed in this report, press home the priority which it gives to the promotion of vocational training and access to competencies. These are important advances which have to be made particularly with regard to competitivity, employment and social cohesion to ensure the construction of a learning society and make progress towards a knowledge based union.

II

(Acts whose publication is not obligatory)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 30 June 1993

on access to continuing vocational training

(93/404/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 128 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission (1),

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (2),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (3),

Whereas the first principle established by Council Decision 63/266/EEC of 2 April 1963 laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy (4) states that every person should receive adequate training, with particular reference to the need to promote basic and advanced vocational training and, where appropriate, retraining suitable for the various stages of working life, and the need to offer to every person, by means of permanent facilities for vocational advancement, the opportunity to gain promotion or to receive instruction for a new and higher level of activity;

Whereas, under the terms of Decision 63/266/EEC, it is the responsibility of the Member States and the competent institutions of the Community to apply such general principles within the framework of the Treaty;

Whereas the development of human resources by means of vocational training is one of the essential elements in increasing the competitiveness of the European economy; whereas, as affirmed by the European Council meeting in Hanover on 27 and 28 June 1988, the achievement of the Single Market must be accompanied by increased access to continuing training;

Whereas technological developments, their impact on employees' skills and the growth of unemployment make it necessary to develop access to continuing vocational training;

Whereas point 15 of the Community Charter of the fundamental social rights of workers, adopted by the Heads of State and Government of 11 Member States at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 9 December 1989, states in particular that:

> 'Every worker of the European Community must be able to have access to vocational training and to benefit therefrom throughout his working life. In the conditions governing access to such training there may be no discrimination on grounds of nationality.
>
> The competent public authorities, undertakings or the two sides of industry, each within their own sphere of competence, should set up continuing and permanent training systems enabling every person to undergo retraining, more especially through leave for training purposes, to improve his skills or to acquire new skills, particularly in the light of technical developments.';

(1) OJ No C 23, 27. 1. 1993, p. 8.
(2) OJ No C 150, 31. 5. 1993.
(3) OJ No C 129, 10. 5. 1993, p. 57.
(4) OJ No 63, 20. 4. 1963, p. 1338/63.

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Whereas vocational training remains of constant concern to both employers and workers in the context of the dialogue between the two sides of industry [1];

Whereas the Economic and Social Committee adopted a report on 22 October 1992 on vocational training as a means of promoting vocational qualifications and a strategic instrument for the economic and social development of the European Community;

Whereas on 21 April 1993 the European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report on vocational training policy in the European Community for the 1990s, in which the subject of access to continuing training is considered;

Whereas transnational cooperation measures have been undertaken at Community level [2];

Whereas demographic trends will significantly reduce the number of young people entering the Community labour market, which, together with changes in the working environment, must lead to an updating and greater adaptation of skills among the working population;

Whereas it has been noted throughout the Community that the problems faced by women in gaining access to employment are largely attributable to their limited access to vocational training; whereas particular attention must be devoted to ensuring that women have effective access to continuing vocational training; whereas the increase in the number of working women should also be taken into account [3];

Whereas cooperation in the field of continuing vocational training should also be based on existing provisions in force in the Member States, while respecting the diversity of national legal systems and practices, the powers under national law of the parties concerned and contractual autonomy; whereas the initiatives taken at national level by the Member States and the two sides of industry are many and varied; whereas it appears, as regards the Community Charter of the fundamental social rights of workers, and taking into account the international dimension of the action, that they should be supported at Community level; whereas, finally, it is essential to encourage a synergy of resources and promote partnerships between the public and private sectors;

Whereas the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training has been consulted; whereas it has recognized the strategic importance of the question of continuing vocational training in undertakings, for the Member States and for the Community, and the necessity for the Community to be seen to play an active role in this area,

I. RECOMMENDS that Member States, taking into account the resources available and the respective responsibilities of the competent public authorities, undertakings and the two sides of industry, while respecting the diversity of national legal systems and/or practices, gear their vocational training policies to ensuring that every worker of the Community must be able to have access to continuing vocational training without any form of discrimination and to benefit therefrom throughout his or her working life;

II. RECOMMENDS that, in order to provide easy access for as many employees as possible, Member States:

1. raise awareness among undertakings about the links between workers' skills and the competitiveness of undertakings to encourage them to give priority to improving the quality and skills of their employees and to establish

[1] See following texts:
- joint opinion of 6 March 1987 on training and motivation, information and consultation,
- joint opinion of 13 February 1990 on the creation of a European occupational and geographical mobility area and improving the operation of the labour market in Europe,
- joint opinion of 19 June 1990 on basic education and initial, vocational and adult training,
- joint opinion of 21 September 1991 on ways of facilitating the broadest possible effective access to training opportunities,
- agreement of 31 October 1991 between the two sides of industry at European level,
- European Framework Agreement of 6 September 1990 between the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP) on training in public enterprises.

[2] See following texts:
- Council Decision 90/267/EEC of 29 May 1990 establishing an action programme for the development of continuing vocational training in the European Community (Force) (OJ No L 156, 21. 6. 1990, p. 1),
- Council Decision 89/657/EEC of 18 December 1989 establishing an action programme to promote innovation in the field of vocational training resulting from technological change in the European Community (Eurotecnet) (OJ No L 393, 30. 12. 1989, p. 29), both as amended by Decision 92/170/EEC (OJ No L 75, 21. 3. 1992, p. 51),
- Council Decision 89/27/EEC of 16 December 1988 adopting the second phase of the programme on cooperation between universities and industry regarding training in the field of technology (Comett II) (OJ No L 13, 17. 1. 1989, p. 28),
- Council Decision 91/387/EEC of 22 July 1991 amending Decision 87/569/EEC concerning an action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life (Petra) (OJ No L 214, 2. 8. 1991, p. 69),
- Council Regulation (EEC) No 4255/88 of 19 December 1988 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the European Social Fund (OJ No L 374, 31. 12. 1988, p. 21).

[3] Commission of the European Communities: *Employment in Europe* (1992).

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training plans and programmes appropriate to their size and business objectives, making their managers aware of requirements in this respect and informing them accordingly.

These plans and programmes may be established by taking into account available human and financial resources, the organization of work, future skill requirements, the need to anticipate industrial and technological change and the transnational dimension of continuing vocational training;

2. make provision for specific incentives and technical support measures for small and medium-sized undertakings.

These could include, for example, assistance with regard to advice on training and assistance with regard to analysis of training needs;

3. encourage undertakings to give impetus to the continuing vocational training necessary for their development, taking account of the particular situation of the employees of the undertakings, particularly in order to promote, where appropriate, the measures described below;

4. make provision for specific incentives and technical support measures which are appropriate, necessary and adequate for undertakings facing industrial change, in order to encourage vocational training and retraining for their employees;

5. develop continuing vocational training in order to make it an important feature of regional and local development, taking into account the specific needs of employees and undertakings;

support the establishment of partnerships, particularly at regional or local level, to analyse the requirements of undertakings and employees and to provide up-to-date information on training opportunities in order to match supply and demand as closely as possible;

6. impress on employers that they should inform their employees as soon as possible and, if necessary, at the time of their recruitment, about the undertaking's policy and activities in the field of continuing vocational training and staff development and about the terms of access to continuing vocational training, including the possibility of being assigned non-active status for the purpose of continuing vocational training;

7. support initiatives which enable workers who so desire to assess their continuing vocational training needs.

This assessment should be carried out within or outside the undertaking and/or in partnership with specialized institutions.

The use of the results must be confidential;

8. encourage the information and consultation of employees' representatives or, in the absence of such representatives, the employees themselves on the development and implementation of the training plans and programmes of the undertaking concerned;

9. make employees and undertakings more aware of the importance of continuing vocational training leading to qualifications relevant to the employment market.

To this end, it should be ensured that training is not directed specifically towards the post in question alone but that it provides the means of anticipating and mastering developments in production systems and the organization of work in order to strengthen the competitiveness of undertakings and improve employees' job prospects;

10. encourage the development of the most suitable teaching and learning methods in continuing vocational training which will facilitate access to continuing vocational training for employees, e.g. methods of self-training on the job, distance learning, media-assisted learning, etc;

11. help less-qualified employees, whatever their status, to benefit from continuing vocational training measures enabling them to achieve a basic level of qualification and giving them the basis for mastery of new technologies.

Particular attention should be paid to providing access to continuing training for employees or groups of employees who have not benefited from training for a certain length of time or who have limited opportunities for employment and job prospects;

12. encourage access for, and effective participation by, women in continuing vocational training.

This may in particular help to open up new professional fields to women and encourage the resumption of a professional activity after a break in such activity;

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13. promote access to continuing vocational training for young people with a vocational qualification or work experience, whatever their level of skills, and encourage their participation therein, in order to enable them to realise their full potential and acquire skills for the present and the future;

14. encourage access to, and participation in, continuing vocational training by the unemployed.

Particular attention should be paid to the long-term unemployed with inadequate and/or unsuitable qualifications, in order to improve their occupational integration or reintegration.

The continuing vocational training of the unemployed which involves action by undertakings is particularly suited to promoting reintegration into the labour market;

15. encourage, in policies on access to continuing vocational training, a transnational dimension, in particular to assist the free movement of workers;

III. 1. INVITES the Commission to reinforce cooperation with Member States and the two sides of industry, in particular within the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, in order to support the implementation of point II;

2. INVITES the Commission to this end, in concert with the Member States and by utilizing the existing Community action programmes and initiatives in the field of training including, where appropriate, the European Social Fund, and specialized bodies within the Community such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), to:

(a) disseminate and add to the body of comparative information on continuing vocational training systems, including existing provisions and methods for integrating young job-seekers and the long-term unemployed into the labour market;

(b) facilitate suitable exchanges of experience in and methods for significant innovations in continuing training;

(c) support transfers of know-how between Member States, which are important for implementing point II, by means of transnational partnerships and networks, especially for the benefit of regions, sectors, types of undertaking and groups of employees for whom access to continuing training is least developed;

3. Also INVITES the Commission to support moves by both sides of industry at Community level, within the dialogue between them, to discuss access to continuing training in greater depth; such dialogue could, if the two sides consider it desirable, lead to relations based on agreement;

IV. 1. INVITES Member States to provide the Commission, three years after the date of adoption of this recommendation, with a report setting out the measures taken under the terms of points I and II;

2. INVITES the Commission:

(a) on the basis of the reports from the Member States and the results of the dialogue between the two sides of industry, to draw up an assessment report on progress made on the basis of the recommendation in points I and II in the sphere of access to continuing vocational training in the Community;

(b) to submit this assessment report, not later than one year after the date referred to in point IV.1, to the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training;

3. INVITES the Commission to submit this report to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee and to send it to the two sides of industry at Community level.

Done at Luxembourg, 30 June 1993.

For the Council

The President

S. BERGSTEIN

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